

Handicap Committee Guide



WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM

USGA



Handicap Committee Guide

The World Handicap System includes the Rules of Handicapping and the Course Rating System. Its purpose is to enhance the enjoyment of the game of golf and to give as many golfers as possible the opportunity to:

- Obtain and maintain a Handicap Index,
- Use their Handicap Index on any rated golf course around the world, and
- Compete, or play a casual round, with anyone else on a fair and equal basis.

Please Note: This Committee Guide has been drafted for comments and feedback, and was published in January 2020. While it is in draft format, it may be distributed and used by golf clubs as authorized by the AGA. The USGA will collect comments and feedback for the first scheduled revision in March 2020.

Handicap Committee Guide

The Handicap Committee Guide is designed as a complement to the Rules of Handicapping book. The guide is meant to assist the Committee in the practical application of the Rules of Handicapping and provide guidance on how to carry out its responsibilities to ensure all golfers have an opportunity to play or compete on an equal and fair basis with fellow golfers.

A golf club is an organization of individual members that typically operate under bylaws with Committees (recommended Handicap Committee) to supervise golf activities and maintain the integrity of the Rules of Handicapping. The club is typically affiliated with an Authorized Association.

For the avoidance of doubt, your Authorized Association is the body under which your golf club sits or is affiliated and should be consulted as needed for guidance.

Handicap Committee Responsibilities

The members of your club will be depending on you to:

1. Know the Rules of Handicapping
2. Educate and communicate the Rules of Handicapping to your members
3. Display charts for converting Handicap Index to Course Handicap
4. Have up-to-date Course Ratings and Slope Ratings for each set of tees at the club
5. Communicate handicap allowances
6. Ensure the timely submission of scores
7. Maintain accurate player scoring records

1. Know the Rules of Handicapping

The authorization of a golf club to distribute a Handicap Index to its members is contingent upon it following all the procedures set down in the Rules of Handicapping. All Authorized Associations should have various resources available to help and support the Handicap Committee learn the Rules and perform its responsibilities.

2. Educate and Communicate the Rules of Handicapping to Members

How well players comply with the Rules of Handicapping depends, to a large extent, on how well their responsibilities are communicated to them and their understanding of the potential consequences of not carrying out those responsibilities. An effective Handicap Committee will continually provide the education and information players need.

The Committee should explain the key features of the Rules that are most relevant to the player, so that they understand:

- Which scores are acceptable for handicap purposes and the penalty for not submitting acceptable scores
- When to submit a score for handicap purposes
- How to calculate a maximum hole score for handicap purposes
- How to convert their Handicap Index into a Course Handicap
- Where to find their scoring record
- Principally, how their Handicap Index is calculated
- The process of a handicap review
- The consequences of a player not adhering to their responsibilities

This can be achieved through the golf club's website, newsletters or notice boards. The Committee might also consider holding a member's information evening, as part of the overall communication & awareness process. Authorized Associations should be able to supply Committees with a range of materials to support this effort, including PowerPoint slides, videos, posters and/or pamphlets.

Handicap Committees should make themselves available for questions and should not be afraid to contact their Authorized Association if they are unsure about how to proceed or answer a question.

3. Displaying Charts for Converting Handicap Index to a Course Handicap

A Course Rating and Slope Rating will allow a Handicap Index to be converted into a Course Handicap based on the difficulty of the golf course. This means that each golfer will receive the number of strokes they need to enjoy their round.

It is important that this conversion process is made easy for golfers (both members and guests) and there are a couple of options available, including:

- Use of a mobile app or other electronic tool
- Referring to a printed look-up chart close to the first tee or in the clubhouse.

If look-up charts are available, they should be posted in an accessible place for use by all golfers.

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The Course Handicap is critical in determining the appropriate score to submit for handicap purposes, including adjustments for net double bogey.

4. Course Rating and Slope Rating of the Club

All golf courses will need Course Rating and Slope Ratings. If one or more set of tees on a course have not been rated, the Committee should contact their Authorized Association for advice. The rating information from every set of tees, for both genders, should be printed on the scorecard and displayed in a prominent place at the club.

5. Communicating Handicap Allowances

Allowances are designed to allow players the opportunity to win or finish near the top in competitions. It is important that Competition Committees use allowances in all forms of play to ensure fair play. Players should be given their Playing Handicap for the competition prior to the start of play.

An important reminder: The Course Handicap should be used in determining the appropriate score to submit for handicap purposes, including adjustments for net double bogey.

6. Ensuring the Timely Submission of Scores

The Rules of Handicapping rely on the accurate and timely submission of all acceptable scores. Scores need to be submitted immediately following play to ensure that:

- They are included in the Playing Conditions Calculation
- They are available for peer review, and
- The Handicap Index can be updated ready for the next day, or soon after.

The calculation of a Handicap Index under the World Handicap System is designed to reflect a player's demonstrated ability, and this is only possible if there are enough scores upon which to base that calculation. You may need to encourage and promote the benefits of submitting scores under the new Rules for all authorized formats of play, which include both competition and recreational scores.

The process of submitting a score should be made as easy as possible for the golfer – especially when they are playing away from their home club. This may include:

- Use of a mobile app
- Use of a terminal or kiosk at the golf club
- An online computation service to collect scores

As above, it is important to make the Course and Slope Rating information easily accessible for all golfers to allow them to properly record their scores.

7. Maintaining Accurate Player Scoring Records

The Handicap Index should be updated the day after a score was submitted, or as soon as possible thereafter. This will generally be an automated procedure within the handicap computation service. It is recommended the club direct their members to the options available to view their Handicap Index and scoring record information. This may include:

- Through a mobile app
- Through handicap software
- Reports displayed in the clubhouse, or provided by the club upon request

Any errors or omissions in a player's scoring record reported to the Handicap Committee must be handled appropriately, depending on the situation.

A Handicap Index only lapses if a player is no longer a member of at least one golf club. The player's scoring record should, however, be retained wherever possible (preferably through a computation service). This will assist a Handicap Committee if the player obtains a Handicap Index again in the future.

Committee Actions

The Rules of Handicapping include safeguards to ensure a player's Handicap Index accurately reflects their demonstrated ability. However, in rare instances where the handicap calculation and inherent safeguards cannot prevent a player's Handicap Index from straying too far away from their demonstrated ability, it will be necessary for the Handicap Committee to step in and take action.

It is strongly recommended that the Handicap Committee should perform a handicap review of all its members annually. Handicap reviews can also be conducted for individual players at any time during the year. The Handicap Committee should pay particular attention to any scores on a player's scoring record that have been brought to the Committee's attention by other members or players.

If it is deemed appropriate to take action, the Handicap Committee has recommended procedures within the Rules of Handicapping which they may follow. These procedures are designed to ensure that players are treated fairly and consistently from golf club to golf club.

The Handicap Committee when considering any adjustment to, or withdrawal of, a player's Handicap Index should ensure that the player is involved in the process and fully informed of the level of any adjustment or withdrawal and for how long it applies.

The Handicap Committee should ensure that it has procedures in place to administer adjustments and/or withdrawals of a player's Handicap Index and to settle any disputes in relation to the Rules of Handicapping.

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Review of Responsibilities

The following is a checklist of activities for the Handicap Committee to consider ensuring they are performing their duties.

Feature	Action Items
Handicap Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a Handicap Committee in accordance with guidelines issued by Authorized Association.
Learn the Rules of Handicapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend a nearby education seminar if offered by your Authorized Association.• Learn the Rules of Handicapping and familiarize yourself with the terminology.
Educate others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize a member's information evening.• Utilize the resources provided to educate members by your Authorized Association.
Apply the Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Handicap Committee should be actively reviewing scoring records and educating the membership on their responsibilities.• Establish procedures for players to follow when playing in an authorized format of play.
Display Charts for Golfers to Determine their Course Handicap	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage golfers to use a mobile app (if available) or display Course Handicap look-up charts, which are easily accessible to golfers to determine their correct Course Handicap for play.

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Feature	Action Items
Course Rating and Slope Rating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure your course has a Course Rating and Slope Rating, for each set of tees, for each gender (where appropriate), with the help of your Authorized Association.• When placing a new order for scorecards, include space for Course Rating and Slope Rating values for each set of tees, ensuring the most up-to-date ratings are included.
Submission of Scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educate golfers on what is an acceptable score• Make it as easy as possible for golfers to submit an acceptable score.• Encourage timely submission of all acceptable scores.
Scoring Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make scoring records available for other members and players.• Ensure player scoring records are maintained and accurate.

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The preceding pages apply to all Handicap Committees around the world who oversee the governance at their club to support the World Handicap System. The following items apply to Handicap Committees within the United States and should be referenced when performing duties as the Committee.

Checklist

Items below identified with a “✓” indicate the club must be in compliance with to help ensure they are properly following the Rules of Handicapping. If in doubt, the club should contact their Allied Golf Association (AGA) for guidance to bring the club into compliance.

✓ Golf Club

As determined by the USGA, a golf club is an organization of at least ten active individual members that operates under bylaws with Committees (especially a Handicap Committee) to supervise golf activities, provide peer review, and maintain the integrity of the Rules of Handicapping.

Members of a golf club must have a reasonable and regular opportunity to play golf with each other. The members' scores must be posted as soon as practicable and be available for inspection by others, including, but not limited to, fellow members and the club's Handicap Committee.

A golf club is one of three (3) Types:

Type 1. The members of a Type 1 club are located at a specific golf course with a valid Course Rating and Slope Rating where a majority of the club's events are played and where the club's scoring records are accessible and demonstrate a frequency of play; or

Type 2. The members of a Type 2 club are affiliated, or known to one another, via a business, fraternal, or social organization. The majority of the club members had an affiliation prior to organizing the club and have no affiliation to any one golf course or demonstrate frequency of play at a specific golf course. Members generally must be within approximately a 100-mile radius of the principal location of the golf club. The principal location of a golf club must be the physical address in the city or town which the club first identified in its application for an authorization; or

Type 3. The members of a Type 3 club had no prior affiliation, and a majority of the recruiting and sign up of the membership is done by solicitation to the public (e.g., newspaper, Internet). Members do not exhibit any regularity of play at any specific golf course. Members generally must be within approximately a 100-mile radius of the principal location of the golf club. The principal location of a golf club must be the physical address in the city or town which the club first identified in its application for an authorization.

Note: Where clarification of a golf club type is needed, the AGA or the USGA will make the final determination as to the club type.

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✓ The Handicap Committee and Handicap Chair

In addition to the definition of the Committee within the Rules of Handicapping, it is recommended the Committee have an odd number of members. The Handicap Committee should be chaired by a member of the golf club. An employee is encouraged to serve on the Handicap Committee; however, it is preferable to not have the employee serve as chair.

✓ Education and Assessment Requirements

The Committee is responsible for ensuring their golf club is in full compliance and fulfills all educational and assessment requirements. Any club that fails to do so will not be permitted to use the Rules of Handicapping.

✓ Active/Inactive Season

The Committee must confirm the club is following the inactive season as determined by the AGA having jurisdiction in its region (if applicable).

✓ Insist the Rules of Golf be Followed

The Handicap Committee must ensure the members play by the Rules of Golf. If a Type 1 club, the Committee should confirm the golf course is marked in accordance with the Rules of Golf.

The AGA may be able to assist in properly marking the golf course.

✓ Scoring Record Display

As a part of peer review, the Committee should make the scoring record of members accessible for the certification of scores. This may be accomplished through handicap software provided by the club (i.e., score posting kiosk or mobile app).

✓ Course Handicap Tables

Although the Course Handicap tables should be available at the club, the player may also utilize the Course Handicap Calculator located on the USGA website, www.usga.org.

✓ Course Rating and Slope Rating of the Club

The Committee should periodically review the scoring record of members to validate the published Course and Slope Ratings are being used in the calculation of the Handicap Index. Published ratings can be found on the Course Rating Database located on the USGA website, ncrdb.usga.org.

✓ Par

The determination of par is a part of the course rating process and will be adjudicated by the AGA. The golf club must make certain the par assigned for each hole, tee-markers and gender be printed on the club's scorecard or posted in a prominent place at the club. Par must be available for the player to apply Rules of Handicapping procedures such as net par and net double bogey.

The Committee should periodically review the course data within the handicap software to validate the par listed on the scorecard matches what is listed within the software.

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✓ Stroke Index Allocation

Stroke Index Allocation is used to determine the maximum hole score to be posted for handicap purposes as well as knowing where the golfer is to give or receive handicap strokes. It's recommended that each course has one allocation for men and one for women, based on the most commonly played tees for each gender. The stroke index table must be made available through the handicap software and printed on the scorecard for members and guests.

The Committee should periodically review the stroke index values within the handicap software to confirm the numbers listed on the scorecard matches what is listed within the software.

✓ Modification of Course

The Handicap Committee must notify the AGA when temporary tees and/or greens are used. The AGA will decide whether scores made under those conditions are to be accepted for handicap purposes, and whether the Course Rating and Slope Rating should be modified temporarily.

If a temporary rating will not be issued, the Handicap Committee has a responsibility to notify its members that when a hole is not played or temporary tees/greens are in use, the score for that hole must be net par.

The club must notify the AGA when permanent changes are made to the course. The AGA should then review the current Course and Slope Ratings and determine whether a re-rating is necessary.

✓ Applying Applicable Penalty Scores and Adjusting the Handicap Index of any Member Whose Handicap Index Does Not Reflect their Demonstrated Ability

Rule 7 of the Rules of Handicapping provides details on the process for each of these steps.

PENALTY SCORE

The Committee is authorized to post a penalty score when a player fails to post an acceptable score from an authorized format of play in a timely manner. No prior notification is required, however, as a part of the club's policies and procedures it is recommended to notify players of consequences of failure to post acceptable scores. It is strongly encouraged for the player to post the score within the same day of play.

The penalty score will be identified with the letter P for the score type and can be applied by the Committee through the handicap software. The Committee should decide the appropriate penalty score based on the intent of the player and can select a high or low penalty score. This will duplicate the highest or lowest score differential respectively found in the player's most recent 20 scores.

ADJUSTING A HANDICAP INDEX

If a player's Handicap Index does not reflect their demonstrated ability the Committee should conduct a review.

Using all available evidence, including handicap software for analysis, the Committee may adjust or freeze the Handicap Index of the player. If adjusted, the Committee should continue to monitor the player's scoring record and further adjust the Handicap Index if needed.

The Handicap Index will be identified with the suffix M (e.g., 16.3M).

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Note: When the Handicap Index has been adjusted by the Committee, it may impact the Low Handicap Index value of the player. The Committee should review and consider resetting the Low Handicap Index to the new value unless a lower Handicap Index value becomes eligible.

WITHDRAWING A HANDICAP INDEX

In rare instances where the golfer repeatedly fails to adhere to their responsibilities under the Rules of Handicapping, the Committee may withdraw the Handicap Index from the player.

The player will be identified with a WD as the value for the Handicap Index within the handicap software. The Committee should continue to monitor the player's scoring record and further adjust the Handicap Index if needed.

REINSTATEMENT OF THE HANDICAP INDEX

The Committee shall determine when to reinstate the Handicap Index for the player after it has been withdrawn. Once reinstated, the Committee should continue to monitor the player's scoring record.

PLAYER APPEAL PROCESS

Prior to making an adjustment to a player's Handicap Index, the player must be given the opportunity to respond either in writing or in person to the Committee. The player may escalate their grievance of the Handicap Index adjustment to the AGA Handicap Committee for review if they believe the club's Handicap Committee is not operating within the Rules of Handicapping.

✓ Review of Exceptional Score Reductions (ESR)

The Handicap Committee should perform a review of a player who has multiple ESR adjustments or if a single score produces a -2.0 ESR.

✓ Annual Handicap Review

It is strongly recommended the Handicap Committee conduct a handicap review at least annually for all members of its club. This can be aided through reporting tools available in the handicap software.

The purpose of the review is for the Committee to make certain the Handicap Index of the player is representative of their demonstrated ability. The Committee should look for anomalies within the scoring record. See Appendix D of the Rules of Handicapping for guidance.

Additional information the Committee may want to consider includes, but is not limited to:

- How did the player perform in competitions?
- Did the player have an injury during the year?
- Are scores being posted in a timely manner?
- Have there been significant changes to the home course which may have impacted the fluctuation in the player's scoring record?
- Is the player applying the Rules of Handicapping procedures such as net par and net double bogey appropriately?
- Did the player's home score differentials vary drastically from their away score differentials?

Important Considerations

Although not a part of the checklist above, the following considerations are identified to assist the Handicap Committee to ensure the club's compliance under the Rules of Handicapping.

Centralized Computation

The USGA issues a Handicap Index for all golfers within the United States and performs all calculations exclusively within its centralized computation service. All golfers with a Handicap Index within the United States are a part of the centralized database and can be accessed for peer review purposes by the Handicap Committee.

Playing Conditions Calculation

For practical purposes, PCC will be run once a day only, at 12:00 midnight local time based on the location of the AGA.

Score Types

Within the United States, scores will be identified with the letter designations below. These can be used to help identify the format of play, where a round was played and other details about the round.

H = Home

A = Away

C = Competition

N = Combined Nine Hole

P = Penalty

E = Exceptional (will be an attribute of score type)

Note:

- There is no restriction on 9-Hole scores being posted as competition scores.
- For purposes of handicap review, clubs are encouraged to continue to post certain scores as competition scores. Examples of scores made at the club level that should be designated as competition scores include club championships (stroke or match play) and member-guest competitions.

Score Posting

Where hole-by-hole score entry is in use through the handicap software, applicable adjustments to the gross score can be automatically applied. If hole-by-hole scoring is not in use, the gross score adjusted for net par or net double bogey will need to be calculated and recorded manually. These adjustments may be for when a hole is not played, or a hole has been started but not finished by the player.

Fields that are not populated automatically by the handicap software will need to be populated manually when entering scores.

Working With Other Committees

It is critical for the Handicap Committee to provide guidance to club officials and other club committees to ensure all golfers consistently have the ability to use their Handicap Index on any golf course around the world in order to compete, or play a casual round, with anyone else on a fair and equal basis. Two of the key committees are the Golf Course (or Greens) Committee and the Tournament Committee.

Tournament Committee

The Tournament Committee typically organizes and runs events for your club. The Handicap Committee should consult with the Tournament Committee to ensure the following items are decided upon in advance and clearly communicated:

- Establish the Terms of the Competition for all applicable events at the club.
- Establish a schedule of events that caters to golfers of all abilities, offering all members the opportunity to submit acceptable scores for handicap purposes.
- In certain circumstances, the Committee in charge of the competition (or the Handicap Committee) has the discretion to decide what Playing Handicap the player should use for specific rounds being played.
- Jointly obtain approval from the appropriate AGA requesting a suspension of score submission due to exceptionally poor course conditions.
- Refer to and use the recommended Handicap Allowances outlined in Appendix C of the Rules of Handicapping for various formats of play.
- Handicap Committee should examine the results of competitions and take appropriate action if needed.
- Handicap Index eligibility requirements for the event.
- The stroke index allocation to be used for the competition.
 - In mixed competitions where players play their own ball and where allocations are different for men and women, the players receive strokes based on their respective stroke allocations.
 - In mixed foursome, including selected drive match play (each side plays one ball), as well as Stableford competitions, strokes are received based on the men's allocation.
- In a team competition where players play the same ball (Foursome, Chapman/Pinehurst, Scrambles) and a single Playing Handicap is used for the team, the handicap allowances are applied to each player(s) Course Handicap, then combined and rounded as the final step to determine the team Playing Handicap.
 - In a foursome match, the allowance for the higher-handicapped side is 50 percent of the difference between the combined Course Handicap of each side. (When selected

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drives are permitted, the allowance is 40 percent.) The lower handicapped side competes at scratch.

- The Handicap Index to be used for the competition.
 - It is recommended to use the Handicap Index in effect on a date as close to the start of the competition as possible.
- For multi-round events, determine if the Handicap Index will be updated between rounds or if the Handicap Index at the start of the competition will be used for all rounds.
 - It is recommended to use the Handicap Index in effect on a date as close to the start of the competition for all rounds.
- Determine if the Committee in charge of the competition will post the score(s) from each day or if the player will be responsible for score posting.
 - It is recommended for the Committee to post the scores at the end of each day - even if the same Handicap Index is used throughout the event.
 - The player's full, unrestricted Course Handicap should be used for the calculation of their adjusted gross score based on the Handicap Index on the day the competition was played.

Greens Committee

The Handicap Committee should seek the cooperation of the Greens Committee in maintaining both length and normal playing difficulty at a constant and fair level. This can be accomplished by balancing the placement of tee markers so that the course's effective playing length is approximately the same on a daily basis. Similarly, there should be balanced selection of hole locations for the entire course with respect to left, right, center, front and back positions.

The Course Rating and Slope Rating for each set of tee-markers is based on the course being properly marked. During play, a well-marked course allows a player to play by the Rules of Golf and helps to eliminate confusion for players.

Due to weather or maintenance practices, the course may play fast and firm or soft and slow. During these abnormal conditions, it is recommended for the Committee to consider using the rear tee areas for a fast course or the forward tee areas for a slow course.

How to Determine Flights Within a Tournament

Match Play

For a match play competition, customarily the number of players or teams in a flight should be placed in the appropriate draw of 8, 16, 32, or 64 - see below. The players or teams in each flight may be determined on the basis of Handicap Index or Course Handicap. In which case, if there are to be flights of 16, the 16 players with the lowest handicaps (or the 16 teams with the lowest combined handicaps) should comprise the Championship Flight, the next best 16 players or teams based on handicaps should comprise the First Flight, and so on.

Another commonly used method of determining the players or teams for each flight is a stroke-play qualifying round or rounds. If this method is used and there are to be flights of 16, the 16 players or teams with the lowest scores in the qualifying competition should comprise the Championship Flight. If there are to be flights other than the Championship Flight, the 16 players or teams with the next lowest scores should comprise the First Flight, and so on. It is recommended that a tie for last place in a Championship Flight be decided by a hole-by-hole playoff and that players should be advised in advance as to the time and place of the playoff. If a playoff is not feasible, ties should be decided by matching score cards.

In the case of a handicap match-play competition in which flights are to be determined by a qualifying round, the qualifying round may be conducted at scratch or on a handicap basis. If it is desired not to have high and low-handicap players competing against one another in matches, qualifying at scratch is recommended. Although the draw for match play may be completely blind or certain players may be distributed (seeded) throughout different quarters or eighths, the General Numerical Draw is recommended if flights are determined by a qualifying round. When using the General Numerical Draw, each player is assigned a number based on the player's qualifying score. The lowest qualifier is no. 1, the second lowest qualifier is no. 2, and so on. Under the General Numerical Draw, players are paired by number for matches as follows:

For purposes of determining places in the draw, recommendations can be found in the "Official Guide to the Rules of Golf, Committee Procedures, 5F(1)."

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UPPER HALF	LOWER HALF	UPPER HALF	LOWER HALF
64 Qualifiers		32 Qualifiers	
1 vs. 64	2 vs. 63	1 vs. 32	2 vs. 31
32 vs. 33	31 vs. 34	16 vs. 17	15 vs. 18
16 vs. 49	15 vs. 50	8 vs. 25	7 vs. 26
17 vs. 48	18 vs. 47	9 vs. 24	10 vs. 23
8 vs. 57	7 vs. 58	4 vs. 29	3 vs. 30
25 vs. 40	26 vs. 39	13 vs. 20	14 vs. 19
9 vs. 56	10 vs. 55	5 vs. 28	6 vs. 27
24 vs. 41	23 vs. 42	12 vs. 21	11 vs. 22
4 vs. 61	3 vs. 62	16 Qualifiers	
29 vs. 36	30 vs. 35	1 vs. 16	2 vs. 15
13 vs. 52	14 vs. 51	8 vs. 9	7 vs. 10
20 vs. 45	19 vs. 46	3 vs. 13	3 vs. 14
5 vs. 60	6 vs. 59	5 vs. 12	6 vs. 11
28 vs. 37	27 vs. 38	8 Qualifiers	
12 vs. 53	11 vs. 54	1 vs. 8	2 vs. 7
21 vs. 44	22 vs. 43	4 vs. 5	3 vs. 6

Note: If there are insufficient players to complete a flight, byes are used to complete it. If there is one bye, the player in the no. 1 position in the draw should receive it. If there are two byes, the players in the no. 1 and no. 2 positions in the draw should receive them, and so on. If the competition is made up of numerous flights, the Committee should fill in as many flights as possible before using the byes. The byes should be used in completing the last flight.

Stroke Play

If the field is to comprise high and low handicapped competitors, the Committee might wish to establish flights so that each competitor will be competing against other competitors with comparable ability. The handicap range for each flight is up to the Committee as well as if the flights are to be determined using Handicap Index or Course Handicap.

For example, in an individual stroke play competition Flight A might be comprised of competitors with a handicap of 9 or less, Flight B might be for those with handicaps from 10 through 19, Flight C for those with handicaps of 20 through 29, and Flight D for those with handicaps of 30 and higher. Another option is to wait until entries are complete and then create flights with the players divided evenly by handicap or along natural breaks in the entries.

How Ties Will Be Determined

In match play and stroke play, the Terms of the Competition can be used to alter the way in which ties are decided.

Match Play

If a match is tied after the final hole, the match is extended one hole at a time until there is a winner, unless the Terms of the Competition state otherwise.

The Terms of the Competition should specify if the match may end in a tie or if the play-off method will differ from that specified in Rule 3.2a(4). Options include the following:

- The match ends in a tie,
- The match will be extended starting at a specific hole other than the first hole, or
- There will be a play-off over a fixed number of holes (for example, 9 or 18 holes).

In a handicap match, the stroke index allocation as set by the Committee should be used to determine where handicap strokes should be given or received in extra holes unless the Terms of the Competition state otherwise.

A tie in a match should not be decided by a stroke play play-off.

Stroke Play

The Terms of the Competition should specify whether a competition may end in a tie, or if there will be a play-off or matching of scorecards to determine the winner and other finishing positions.

A tie in stroke play should not be decided by a match.

Play-off in Stroke Play

If there is to be a play-off in stroke play, the Terms of the Competition should set the following:

- When the play-off will be held, for example if it will start at a specific time, as soon as possible after the last group finishes or on a later date.
- The holes that will be used for the play-off.
- The number of holes over which the play-off will be played, for example, if it will be a hole-by-hole play-off or over a longer period such as 2, 4 or 18 holes, and what to do if there is still a tie after that.
- In the regular form of stroke play, if a play-off for a handicap competition is over fewer than 18 holes, the number of holes played should be used to determine the number of strokes to be deducted. For example, if a play-off is over one hole, one-eighteenth of the handicaps should be deducted from the scores for the play-off hole.

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- It is recommended that any such play-off consist of at least three holes.
- For play-offs for net competitions where the stroke index allocation is used, such as Four-Ball, Par/Bogey or Stableford competitions, handicap strokes should be applied during the play-off holes as they were assigned for the competition, using the stroke index allocation.
- Players are only required to return a scorecard for the play-off if the Committee issues them to the players.

Matching Scorecards (Also Known as a Scorecard Count-Back)

If a play-off is not feasible or desired, the Terms of the Competition may specify that any ties will be decided by matching scorecards. Even when the winner of a competition is to be decided by a play-off, other positions in the competition may be decided by matching scorecards. The method of matching scorecards should also provide for what will happen if this procedure does not produce a winner.

One method of matching scorecards is to determine the winner based on the best score for the last round. If the tying players have the same score for the last round or if the competition consisted of a single round, determine the winner based on the score for the last nine holes, last six holes, last three holes and finally the 18th hole. If there is still a tie, then the last six holes, three holes and final hole of the first nine holes will be considered in turn. If the round is less than 18 holes, the number of holes used in matching scores may be adjusted.

If this process does not result in a winner, the Committee could consider the competition a tie, or alternatively could decide the winner by chance (such as tossing a coin).

Matching scorecards is also known as a card count-back or a scorecard play-off.

Additional Considerations:

- If this method is used in a competition with a multiple tee start, it is recommended that the "last nine holes, last six holes, etc." are holes 10-18, 13-18, etc.
- For net competitions where the stroke index allocation as set by the Committee is not used, such as individual stroke play, if the last nine, last six, last three holes scenario is used, is used, one-half, one-third, one-sixth of the handicaps should be deducted from the score for those holes.
- In net competitions where the stroke index allocation as set by the Committee is used, such as Four-Ball stroke play, Par/Bogey or Stableford competitions, handicap strokes should be applied consistently with how they were applied for the competition.

How to Get Support

Any questions of doubt should be resolved with the Authorized Golf Association having jurisdiction in the area of the club or with the USGA.