

USGA Handicap System™ Changes, 2018-2019

Effective 1/1/18

Reference Document

Sections

Section 2

Principle: The definition of a golf club is amended to include language where affiliation with any one golf course, or exhibited frequency or regularity of play at any golf course meets the definition of a Type 1 golf club. The new language provides greater clarity for golf club type classifications

Section 2 Definitions

Golf Club

A "golf club" is an organization of at least ten 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 *USGA Handicap System* (See Club Compliance Checklist, Section 8-2m and Decision 2/7). A *golf club* must be [authorized](#) by the USGA to utilize the *USGA Handicap System*. A club can obtain [authorization](#) directly from the USGA or in conjunction with its membership in an *authorized golf association* that is already [authorized](#) by the USGA and that has jurisdiction in the geographic area that includes the principal location of the *golf club*. (See Appendix F.)

*For administrative reasons, some *authorized golf associations* may require a *golf club* to have more than the USGA minimum of ten members in order for the *golf club* to be a member of the *authorized golf association*.

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 *USGA 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 (see Decision 2/6.5); 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 demonstrated frequency of play at a specific golf course. The residence or business address of each member of the golf club must generally be within approximately 75 miles of the principal location of the golf club; 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 and the residence or business address of each member of the golf club must generally be within approximately 50 miles of the principal location of the golf club.

Note: Within the context of the USGA Handicap System, a member is defined as one who is affiliated with a licensed golf club for the purpose of obtaining a Handicap Index. A club's type should be determined at the local club level. Where clarification of a golf club type is needed, the *Authorized Golf Association* or the USGA will make the final determination as to the club type.

Section 5

Principle: To enhance the integrity of the USGA Handicap System, and to ensure the alternate calculation of a Handicap Index for players with two or more eligible T-scores as noted in Section 10-3 is supported, it is recommended that the Committee in charge of the competition or the Handicap Committee should post all tournament scores.

5-2e. Posting a Tournament Score

A tournament score is a score made in a competition organized and conducted by a Committee in charge of the competition. The competition must identify a winner(s) based on a *stipulated round(s)*, and must be played under the Rules of Golf. The competition can be match play or stroke play. The USGA recommends that the Committee in charge of the competition should post all tournament scores. The Committee (preferably the Handicap Committee, in consultation with the Committee in charge of the competition) must determine in advance if these conditions are met, and

announce in advance whether the score must be identified by the letter “T” when posted. (Revised)

Section 8

Principle: To differentiate between a golfer who has a temporary injury versus a disability, the term “disability” was changed to “injury”.

8-4c.(iii) Temporary Injury

An increase in a *Handicap Index* must not be granted because a player's game is temporarily off or the player has discontinued play. However, an increased handicap may be given for a temporary injury. The modified *Handicap Index* must be identified by the letter "M" to indicate that it has been modified by the club's *Handicap Committee*. For example, a player having had recent surgery may be given a modified *Handicap Index* while recovering. (See Decisions 8-4c/1, 8-4c/2.)

Section 11

Principle: To improve operational efficiencies, and protect the integrity of the USGA Handicap System, the Authorized Golf Association's will have the following responsibilities in the administration oversight of the USGA Handicap System within its territory.

11-11.

The Authorized Golf Association plays a critical role in the administration and oversight of the USGA Handicap System within its territory and will have the following responsibilities. (NEW)

1. Approval of Club Authorization Application – The Authorized Golf Association must review all golf club applications for use of the USGA Handicap System, including those golf clubs required to affiliate with the Authorized Golf Association for handicap administration and oversight purposes. The Authorized Golf Association must have access to the appropriate handicap data and must conduct a review on a regular basis.

2. Review/Approve Handicap Adjustments – when a club handicap committee is going to modify the Handicap Index of a member, the Authorized Golf Association will have the opportunity to review the adjustment and ensure the committee has followed the proper procedures. If the Authorized Golf Association has evidence where the adjustment does not reflect the player’s current potential ability, or in cases where an adjustment should have been applied, it has authority to overrule the golf club.
3. Removal of a Reduction – when a club handicap committee wants to override a reduction due to exceptional “T” scores, the club must contact the Authorized Golf Association with the supporting information where the AGA will perform the reduction override. The Authorized Golf Association must work with the local golf club’s handicap committee to resolve any disagreements surrounding the proposed reduction, and will have final authority on the matter.
4. Notify Clubs When a Member’s Handicap Index Increases or Decreases Substantially Using Scoring Data – The Authorized Golf Association must monitor the scoring records of all members (either those through Authorized Golf Association member clubs, or affiliated for handicap purposes), and when it increases outside of what would be considered a “normal range” notify the player’s golf club(s) to take appropriate measures.
5. Tournament Scores – The Authorized Golf Association should advise the golf club on what scores should be identified as tournament scores as noted in Section 2, and if there is a dispute at the golf club level, the Authorized Golf Association has authority to make the final decision.
6. Handicap Index Withdrawal – The Authorized Golf Association must review all Handicap Index withdrawals and work with the golf club where a withdrawal is being considered. Where there is a conflict of interest on the matter, or where evidence exists that supports a withdrawal, the Authorized Golf Association has final authority on the matter.
7. The Authorized Golf Association must have a Handicap Committee that meets on a regular basis to review and settle any disputes at the golf club level pertaining to any

part of the USGA Handicap System. In extreme cases, these matters can be brought to the USGA for resolution.

8. Assist in determination of when preferred lies may be in operation for acceptable scores under authorized formats to be posted.
9. Adjudicate questions of hole par and provide Stroke Allocation recommendations (par will be factored into the Course Handicap under the proposed World Handicap System).
10. Determine active season schedules within its territory for handicap purposes.
11. The Authorized Golf Association is to provide regular support on the USGA Handicap System, as well as offer educational opportunities to member and direct access clubs on an annual basis.
12. Ensure that all courses within the Authorized Golf Association territory have a current USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating issued within the last 10 years.

Decisions and Appendices

Decision 2/6.5

Principle: To clearly define the potential impact of advertising on club type.

2/6.5. Effect of Advertising or Solicitation of Unaffiliated Members on Golf Club Category

- **Q:** Can a golf club that is currently classified as a Type 1 or Type 2 club advertise for the purposes of adding unaffiliated players for handicap purposes? If so, could this action cause the club to become a Type 3 golf club?
- **A:** Nothing prohibits any golf club from advertising or soliciting for new members. However, accepting unaffiliated members from a large geographic area, where there is **limited or** no proximity of these members to the principal location of the club **has the potential to negatively impact** peer review and other requirements in the USGA Handicap System. This **practice** may **also** affect the golf club **classification**, which impacts club and member requirements. (REVISED)

Decision 8-4c/1.

Principle: See Section 8 principle above.

8-4c/1. Treatment of Player with Temporary Injury

Q: A player with a Handicap Index of 11.1 discontinued play due to an injury. The player has started to play again, but due to recovery from the injury, the player's three latest scores have been 104, 100, and 102. May the player receive a special adjustment while recovering?

A: The player is entitled to a special adjustment under Section 8-4c(iii). The player should be assigned a modified Handicap Index (M) to reflect current ability, as needed during the temporary injury, and it must be identified by the letter "M" to indicate that it has been modified by the club Handicap Committee. (REVISED)

Decision 8-4c/2.

Principle: See Section 8 principle above.

8-4c/2. Treatment of Player with a Permanent Injury

Q: Two players have suffered extreme physical injuries. Player A is able to resume playing golf after not being able to play for many months. Player B does not have a previous scoring record. Player A will not ever be able to play to the Handicap Index established before the injury and Player B did not have a Handicap Index. May these players be entitled to a special adjustment?

A: The club Handicap Committee may discard Player A's previous scoring record and provide Player A with a modified Handicap Index (M) for use until five scores have been returned to establish a new Handicap Index. Player B must post five scores to establish a Handicap Index. (Revised)