

# 2024 WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM™ REVISION

## QUICK REFERENCE PLACEMAT - FOR GOLF CLUB ADMINISTRATORS



in association with  
**USGA**®

The USGA and The R&A announced key changes to the World Handicap System that will go into effect within the United States on **January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024**. This resource is designed specifically for your staff and Handicap Committee to help address the questions you will most likely receive from your members and guests.

### **New treatment of 9-hole scores**

9-hole scores are no longer combined in the order that they are received. Instead, when a 9-hole score is posted, the 9-hole Score Differential™ from the round played is added to the player's expected Score Differential over 9 holes, which is based on their Handicap Index®, to determine an 18-hole Score Differential for immediate use. For a 9-hole score to be acceptable, all 9 holes must be played on a rated tee set.

### **New treatment for holes not played**

When 10-17 holes are played, players are required to post their scores hole-by-hole. This is because the player's Score Differential from the holes played is added to their expected Score Differential over the number of remaining holes to create an 18-hole Score Differential for the round.

### **Scores made at shorter length courses are now acceptable**

The minimum yardage requirement for a course to obtain a Course Rating™ and Slope Rating™ has been reduced to 750 yards for 9 holes and 1,500 yards for 18 holes - meaning players can use their Handicap Index and post scores from shorter tees and par-3 courses that have been issued Ratings.

### **New Handicap Review tools are in the works**

To assist your Handicap Committee with carrying out its responsibilities, new Handicap Review tools will be provided to all golf clubs beginning this spring that identifies players in need of attention and will provide a recommended Handicap Index adjustment based upon scoring data.

For more information, visit [usga.org/whs](https://usga.org/whs)

### **The USGA Handicap Committee Guide is now included within the Rules of Handicapping**

The digital version of the *Rules of Handicapping* will be updated on January 16<sup>th</sup> to reflect the 2024 changes. The USGA Handicap Committee Guide will be included within Section 6 of the digital version.

### **Two updates have been made to handicap allowance recommendations**

1. Clarification C/1 of [Appendix C](#) of the *Rules of Handicapping* provides guidance on when to adjust the handicap allowance percentage for an individual stroke play competition based on the size and makeup of the field.
2. In four-ball match play, the 90% handicap allowance is now applied to the difference in Course Handicap™ between players, rather than to each individual. See Appendix C for more details.

## January 16<sup>th</sup> Considerations

### **For any player(s) with an uncombined 9-hole score in their scoring record as of January 16<sup>th</sup>, the score will be retained or discarded based on the date played.**

A player's uncombined 9-hole score will be:

- Discarded if the round was played prior to January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, or
- Converted to an 18-hole Score Differential for immediate use if the round was played between January 1<sup>st</sup> and January 15<sup>th</sup> of 2024.

\*This will not apply to golfers who have not yet established a Handicap Index.

### **If you are conducting a club competition on January 16<sup>th</sup>:**

Consider using each player's Handicap Index as of January 15<sup>th</sup> (or a date earlier than January 15<sup>th</sup>). This is because score-posting technology will be updating throughout the day to accommodate the 2024 WHS™ Revision.



**Rule 3.2 Interpretations:**

**3.2/1 – Invalid Reasons For Not Playing a Hole**

Rule 3.2 describes what score to return for a hole that has not been played for a valid reason in order for an *acceptable score* to be submitted for handicap purposes.

If it is determined that a player has not played a hole or holes for an invalid reason, the score will not be acceptable for handicap purposes. Invalid reasons include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Not playing a particular hole on a *golf course* because the player knows it usually causes them difficulty and they are likely to return a high hole score.
- Not playing the final holes on a *golf course* in order to avoid submitting a high or low score.

In either case, the *Handicap Committee* could add a *penalty score* to the player's *scoring record*, if it is determined that the player's actions were for the purpose of gaining an unfair scoring advantage (see Rule 7.1b).

**3.2/2 – Designation of Score for Holes Not Played**

The player must add a designation against any score returned that includes holes not played (see Appendix B, Note 5). This is to ensure that all of the procedures set out within the *Rules of Handicapping* can be carried out properly, for example the calculation of a *Score Differential* for a 9-hole score (see Rule 5.1b) and the calculation of any adjustment for abnormal playing conditions (see Rule 5.6).

Where hole-by-hole scores are required, the player should add a designation against each hole not played.

 **3.3 When a Hole is Started But Player Does Not Hole Out**

There are various circumstances that might result in a player starting a hole but not holing out. For example, when:

- The result of the hole has already been decided,
- A hole has been conceded in match play,
- A player's partner has already posted a better score in a Four-Ball format and the player picks up, or

- A player has already reached their *net double bogey* limit on a specific hole.

When a player starts a hole but does not hole out for a valid reason, subject to other provisions set out within the *Rules of Handicapping*, the player must record their *most likely score* or *net double bogey*, whichever is lower, as appropriate for the situation and depending on the format of play.

The *most likely score* is:

- The number of strokes already taken to reach a position on a hole, plus
- The number of strokes the player would most likely require to complete the hole from that position, plus
- Any penalty strokes incurred during play of the hole.

*Most likely scores* should be determined on any hole in accordance with the following guidelines:

Position of the Ball	Strokes to be Added
If the ball lies on the putting green, and is no more than 5 feet (1.5 metres) from the hole:	Add one additional stroke.
If the ball lies between 5 feet (1.5 metres) and 20 yards (20 metres) from the hole:	Add 2 or 3 additional strokes, depending on the position of the ball, the difficulty of the green and the ability of the player.
If the ball lies more than 20 yards (20 metres) from the hole:	Add 3 or 4 additional strokes, depending on the position of the ball, the difficulty of the green and the ability of the player.

(See Diagram 3.3.)