

WEEK 1 - What is the new World Handicap System?

The new World Handicap System (WHS) is designed to:

- Attract more players to the game
- Make handicapping easier to understand
- Give all golfers a Handicap Index that can be transferable from club to club.

Developed by The R&A and USGA in collaboration with existing handicap authorities.

The WHS incorporates the Rules of Handicapping and the Course Rating System, (a consistent method to calculate a golf courses difficulty), to successfully determine a golfer's Handicap Index.

The system, which comes into effect on 2 November 2020 will replace the six different systems currently used by over 15 million golfers, in more than 80 countries, to unify all golfers across the world.

WEEK 2 - Understanding how Course Rating Works

Course Rating will be used to measure the playing difficulty of a golf course. It measures how many strokes a Scratch Golfer (a player with a handicap index of 0.0) should take on any given course. It does this by assessing two main types of challenges which, when combined, result in a common base from which to compare players' abilities:

1. The playing length of the course
2. The obstacles that a player will encounter (e.g. size of green and hazards)

All Course Ratings have been determined by highly trained teams, with all findings checked and verified prior to being published to ensure consistency and equity across England.

Another important factor to establish in the rating system is Bogey Rating, which is the measure of playing difficulty from a set of tees when played by a Bogey Golfer (a player with a handicap index of approximately 20 for a male and 24 for a female).

Knowing the Course Rating & Bogey Rating established by the Course Rating teams allows the WHS to assess and rationalise the relationship between the two. From this, the difficulty of the course for all other levels of ability can be deduced.

Hopefully, this provides you with a good understanding as to how Course Rating is established, and why it is important for the WHS.

WEEK 3 - Understanding how Slope Rating works

Following last week's explanation of Course & Bogey Rating, we are moving straight into another important area for the WHS, which is Slope Rating.

Slope Rating is the number which indicates the relative playing difficulty of a course for Bogey Golfers, compared to Scratch Golfers, and is the difficulty comparison between

these golfers from the same set of tees. In simple terms, it is the combination of the Course Rating and the Bogey Rating, which allows us to calculate the Slope Rating of a set of tees. Please do refer back to last week's newsletter for a reminder about Scratch & Bogey Golfers.

Bogey Rating - Course Rating X Factor = Slope Rating

The use of Slope allows a player's Handicap Index to be portable from course to course and country to country. It also enables acceptable scores from any rated golf course in the world to be submitted for a player's handicap purposes.

Each set of tees will have a Slope Rating value between 55 and 155. Essentially, the higher the Slope Rating, the more additional strokes a Bogey Golfer will need to be able to play it. The lower the Slope Rating, the less strokes a Bogey Golfer will require.

Hopefully, this provides you with a good understanding as to how Slope Ratings are created, how it affects golfers, and why it is important for the WHS.

WEEK 4 - Introduction to Handicap Index Part 1 (Bring your 8 game)

Following last week's explanation of Slope Rating, we now move into the first part of arguably the most important area of the new WHS, Handicap Index. This phrase will become synonymous with golfers in the lead-up-to, and following, the November 2nd introduction of the new system, and we are going to be telling you all about it over the next two weeks!

- Handicap Index will:
- Measure the ability of a player
- Be portable from course to course
- Allow players to compete fairly, therefore promote inclusivity within the game

A Handicap Index is calculated from the best eight scores from a player's last 20 rounds. As a new score is submitted, a player's Handicap Index will automatically update to the most recent 20 scores. A player's Handicap Index will update promptly overnight after the submission of an acceptable score and be ready before the next time they play.

How to obtain a Handicap Index?

When we adopt the WHS in England, most golfers will have a Handicap Index generated based on their existing records. However, for new golfers to gain their Handicap Index they will have to submit a minimum of 54 holes (using any combination of 9 and 18 holes).

Initially, their Handicap Index will be the lowest of their three rounds minus two strokes, and this will continue to be built until the 20 scores are achieved. The maximum Handicap Index for any player is 54, and in order for players to obtain a recognised Handicap Index a player must be an affiliated member of a golf club.

Hopefully, this provides you with a good understanding as to what a Handicap Index is, how golfers will obtain one, and why it is so important to the new system.

WEEK 5 - Introduction to Handicap Index Part 2 (Bring your 8 game)

Following on from the first part of our two-week introduction of Handicap Index, we are now moving into the second part, whereby we'll be explaining how the WHS can safeguard a Handicap Index.

With Handicap Index being calculated by working out an average of the best eight rounds from a player's last 20, golfers might be apprehensive that the change in their Handicap Index may be volatile. However, through the implementation of a Soft Cap and Hard Cap, the WHS will limit any extreme upward movement of a player's Handicap Index within a 365-day period, therefore, protecting against handicap manipulation.

The Soft Cap will suppress movement by 50% after a three-stroke increase over a player's Low Handicap Index. For clarity in this instance, a Low Handicap Index is the lowest Handicap Index a player has had during the previous 12-month period.

The Hard Cap will restrict upward movement of five-strokes over the Low Handicap Index. Restricting the extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index will ensure that a player's temporary loss of form does not cause the Handicap Index to move too far away from their actual ability. It is important to note that caps will only start to take effect once a player has at least 20 acceptable scores in their record.

Hopefully, the last two WHS education emails have provided you with a good understanding as to what a Handicap Index is, why it is so important, and how it can be safeguarded using the new system.

Remember, you can always ask the Handicap Secretary if you require further clarification.

WEEK 6 - Course Handicap Part 1

A Course Handicap will determine the number of strokes a player will receive when playing from any set of tees on a given course. Before any player starts their round they must convert their Handicap Index into a Course Handicap.

How to work out a Course Handicap? The Course Handicap calculation is:

Handicap Index x (Slope Rating / 113) = Course Handicap.

But don't let this calculation concern you because working out a Course Handicap has been made simple.

England Golf will provide Course & Slope Rating tables to all clubs ahead of the new System launching in November. These Tables should be positioned in conspicuous locations around the club to make them easy to find prior to beginning a round of golf.

Golfers will simply have to choose the tees they are playing off that day, and cross reference their Handicap Index on the Course & Slope Rating table to ascertain their Course Handicap. It really is as simple as that - they're then ready to get out on the course and play.

WEEK 7 - Course Handicap Part 2

Hopefully you found last week's introduction to Course Handicap and explanation of its calculation helpful. We are continuing that theme this week by highlighting our final secondary campaign 'Easy as H.C.P', which will be important when playing golf from 2 November.

Introducing 'Easy as H.C.P'!

As we mentioned last week, before any player starts their round they must convert their Handicap Index into a Course Handicap. This will determine how many shots they will receive when playing a golf course from any set of tees.

An easy way for a player to remember this is to think 'HCP'. This stands for:

H - Handicap Index
C - Course Handicap
P – Play Golf

This should act as a prompt for golfers trying to remember the key elements of the WHS when they arrive at the golf club. It's helpful that many golfers will already recognise HCP as an abbreviation for handicap.

Firstly, they will need to know their Handicap Index.
Secondly they will calculate their Course Handicap using the Slope & Course Rating table.
Finally, head out onto the golf course and play.

It's as easy as HCP!

WEEK 8 - Understanding How Playing Handicap Works

Hopefully you found the last two weeks helpful, as we told you all about Course Handicap and how it affects golfers. We now continue along our timeline and move into explaining Playing Handicap.

What is Playing Handicap?

Playing Handicap is a stroke allowance that is implemented in order to maintain the integrity of the WHS when used in competition. It allows golfers to compete on a level playing field, regardless of their Handicap Index. The Course Handicap converts to a Playing Handicap for competition purposes only and changes depending on the format of play.

The four most important aspects of Playing Handicap to remember are:

- It is only used for competition purposes
- It ensures equity to calculate competition results (via Handicap Allowances)
- Golfers do not need to do anything to calculate it (it is generated before their round)
- Golfers should continue to play in the mindset of their Course Handicap in competition rounds

How is Playing Handicap calculated?

$$\text{Course Handicap} \times \text{Handicap Allowance} = \text{Playing Handicap}$$

It is worth noting that whilst Playing Handicap is important, Handicap Committees do not need to labour the point to golfers regarding this aspect of the WHS. Golfers need to focus more on their Handicap Index and Course Handicap.

Remember, it is as easy as “HCP”

H - Handicap Index
C - Course Handicap
P – Play Golf

Players will calculate their Course Handicap using the Slope & Course Rating table.

WEEK 9 - Understand General Play & Competition Rounds

Hopefully, you found last week helpful when we told you all about Playing Handicap and how it affects golfers. We now continue along our timeline and move into explaining General Play and Competition Rounds and how they count towards your WHS index.

How to submit a score?

After the completion of a competition round, a player has to submit their scorecard as soon as possible in order for their Handicap Index to be updated. Preferably, scores should be posted at the venue being played and on the same day, as this will be when a player's Handicap Index will be updated. If this is not possible, players may post scores utilising the technology available at their golf club.

How to verify a score?

In order to verify a score and for it to count towards a player's WHS index, some basic rules should be followed:

- Play in accordance with The Rules of Golf
- Use an authorised format of play
- Play nine holes to post a 9-hole score
- Play at least 10 holes to post an 18-hole score
- Play with at least one other person
- Play on a course with a current Course Rating and Slope Rating

How your score counts towards the WHS?

Acceptable formats of play for submitting a score towards a player's Handicap Index include any **pre-registered general play 'social' scores and all individual competition rounds, both 9 and 18 holes**, whether played at home or away courses.

Non-acceptable formats of play include a player's individual score from fourball better ball or other match play events.

WEEK 10 - The role of the WHS Handicap Committee

Hopefully you found all about General Play and Competition Rounds, and how they count towards your WHS index, helpful. We now continue along our timeline and move into explaining the role of the Handicap Committees at golf clubs.

Every golf club is required to have a Handicap Committee. They play a vital role in maintaining the integrity of the WHS. Handicap Committee members should have a good working knowledge of the new WHS.

The Handicap Committee role can be summarised as follows:

- To record, maintain and update the Handicap Index of their members
- To notify members of any changes to their index
- To ensure all acceptable scores are uploaded
- To take responsibility for reviewing the handicap record

Handicap Reviews and Competition T&Cs

Results from a competition should be processed promptly, on the same day, to ensure scores have been entered correctly. However, the WHS does not rely on a competition being closed to update handicap records. Prior to events, it is advised that every Handicap Committee publishes their own terms of competition. This will include dates, frequency, entry process, format of play, handicap allowance, tees used, process of deciding ties and other information. Full details are available in the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf, Committee Section 1B and 5A.

Did you know?

The Handicap Committee can set entry criteria to competitions based on the Handicap Index. Example, for the Club Championship they could state that it is only open to players with a handicap of 10 or less. They also have the discretion to create segments of their members based on their Handicap Index in order to award prizes to players of different standards.

WEEK 11 - Annual Review of Handicaps 2020

As a result of questions posed throughout Cornwall, regarding the subject of Annual Reviews, England Golf have issued the following advice.

'We would advise that any reviews are completed early in 2021, unless there is a pressing need. Please do not compete anything pre- 2nd Nov as anything saved will be overwritten at the WHS switch over.'

'The review process remains similar, just an index value can be adjusted as needed and committee have more reporting functionality via the WHS portal.'

At the moment we are unsure whether the implementation of the WHS switch over will have any impact on any of the General Play adjustments made during 2020. This will be established when we eventually carry out the Annual Review in early 2021.