

Handicap Forum

The USGA has developed the Handicap system that we all use but do you really understand it. We hope the following will clear up any questions that you may have about golf handicaps.

Q. What is a golf handicap?

A. A golf handicap is a number that indicates a golfer's skill. It is the difference between a player's ability and a scratch golfer. The handicap system allows players of differing abilities to compete on an equitable level.

Q. Who governs the handicap system?

A. The United States Golf Association developed and governs the golf handicap system. The USGA authorizes regional associations to offer and patrol the handicap system to member clubs. Our local association is the Northern Ohio Golf Association (NOGA). Columbia Hills is a member of both the USGA and NOGA.

Q. What is your responsibility in the handicap system?

A. The system is based on two premises: 1) that each player will try to make the best score at every hole in every round. 2) that every player post every acceptable round in a timely manner.

Q. How are handicaps calculated?

A. Your most recent 20 scores are used to establish your handicap. By using your best 10 scores out of those 20, your handicap index is determined. The handicap formula is a bit complicated but uses your score, the course rating, and the slope rating.

Q. When should you post a score in the handicap computer?

A. A score should be posted any time you play 18 holes, any time you play nine holes or any time you complete at least 13 holes of an 18 hole round.

Q. How do you post a score if you play more than 13 holes but don't complete 18?

A. You should fill in the scorecard for those holes not played with a score equal to the par on those holes plus any handicap strokes that you would have received on those holes.

Q. What happens if you play 18 holes at a course other than Columbia Hills?

A. All "away" scores should be posted in the computer as soon as possible. The four things you will need to post an away score is the date, your score, course rating and course slope rating. You can post your away scores on the internet at www.GHIN.org or you can post them the next time you are at Columbia Hills.

Q. How often are handicaps revised?

A. New handicaps are calculated every two weeks on Wednesday. A complete player listing is available in the Pro Shop.

Q. How does a new member get started in the handicap process?

A. New members should stop in the Pro Shop. We will enter you into the handicap computer and show you how to start posting. An official handicap will be established after 5 rounds have been played.

Q. Should you post scores if you traveled during the winter?

A. If you played golf in a region during their "active" season, those scores should be posted at the beginning of our year. Bring your score cards into the Pro Shop and we will post them for you. Handicaps cannot change more than 3 strokes based on your winter scores. .

Q. What does it mean if there is a "T" next to a score on my sticker label?

A. A "T" indicates a Tournament Score. Several of our events are identified as official Tournaments for handicap purposes. If your tournament scores are considerably lower than your other scores, the handicap calculation will weigh them heavier.

Q. What is Equitable Stroke Control (ESC)?

A. ESC sets a maximum number that a player can post on any hole depending on their handicap. It is a downward adjustment of individual scores to make handicaps more representative of a player's potential.

Q. Given that, what score should you post?

A. You should put your actual score on the scorecard, but for handicap purposes you should reduce your score if you had any scores higher than your maximum on a hole. The following is a chart that indicates the maximums allowed for given handicaps:

Players Handicap	Maximum Score On Any Hole
9 or less	Double Bogey
10 through 19	7
20 through 29	8
30 through 39	9
40 and above	10

Q. What is the role of the handicap committee?

A. The primary handicap responsibility rests with the individual golfer, however the handicap committee plays an important role in insuring that golfers of all playing abilities can play together in a fair manner. In doing so, the committee develops procedures to verify that all players adhere to the following:

1. that players turn in all score cards with players complete names.
2. that players post accurate scores in the computer on the day of play.

Q. What happens if you don't post accurate scores in a timely manner?

A. The actual score may be posted by the committee or a penalty score equal to your lowest score may be posted.

Q. What is the difference between a handicap index and your home course handicap?

A. When handicaps are revised, your index is calculated. That index is then put into the course handicap chart which determines your handicap for that course. Each course has a chart based on its rating. Your home course chart may indicate a handicap of 14 while a course you are visiting may give you a handicap of 13. When you visit another course, ask the Pro Shop for their handicap conversion chart.

Q. What do the handicaps on the scorecard mean?

A. Each golf course is analyzed and each hole is ranked from 1 - 18. They are ranked according to where a bogey golfer needs strokes the most in a match against a scratch golfer. The #1 handicap hole indicates the hole where the bogey golfer most needs a stroke in their match against a scratch golfer. The 18th handicap hole is where the bogey golfer least needs a stroke against a scratch golfer. It does not mean it is the easiest hole on the golf course.

Q. How are the holes ranked?

A. Every few years we conduct a hole by hole handicap analysis. Completed scorecards are sent to a data processing company. They generate reports on the average scores on each hole within several handicap ranges. They send recommendations based on their analysis and then our golf committee reviews the report and makes the final determination.

