



World Handicap System

AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUR NEW HANDICAP

You will all be aware that from November 2020 the World Handicap System (WHS) will replace the current CONGU system that has been in place for nearly 40-years. The main differences you will see are exact and playing handicaps being replaced by your HANDICAP INDEX, the conversion of your HANDICAP INDEX into a COURSE HANDICAP, which will differ from course to course, and your SCORE DIFFERENTIAL being used to calculate your HANDICAP INDEX, not your nett score. Yes, it sounds difficult but, in reality, you will be doing little different than you are now, the computer will be doing all the work.

COURSE & SLOPE RATINGS

Central to the WHS are the COURSE & SLOPE RATINGS, but what are they?

COURSE RATING – this represents the difficulty of the course for a scratch golfer from a particular set of tees (think of this as the old Standard Scratch Score).

SLOPE RATING – this rating represents the relative difficulty of a course for a bogey golfer as compared with a scratch golfer (in this context a bogey golfer means 20-handicap for men and 24-handicap for women). Slope ratings have been calculated for each set of tees.

- Slope ratings fall within a range of 55 and 155
- The average Slope Rating in GB & Ireland is 125
- Handicaps are calculated using the neutral Slope Rating of 113

Both ratings are calculated by entering things like the length of the course, width of the fairways, difficulty and speed of greens, depth of rough, and the difficulty factors of the various obstacles (bunkers, penalty areas, gorse, out of bounds, etc) found on the course into a computer programme. The computer chews over the figures and, after much processor scratching, throws out two figures – the COURSE RATING, expressed to one decimal point, e.g. 70.1, and the SLOPE RATING, expressed as a whole number, e.g. 124.

St Austell was rated in the summer of 2018 with the following results:

Gender	Tees	Yardage	Par	Course Rating	Slope Rating
Men	White	6042	69	70.1	124
	Yellow	5758	69	68.9	122
	Red	5479	69	67.6	115
Women	White	6042	75	75.9	132
	Yellow	5758	72	74.7	129
	Red	5479	2	72.9	125

You will note that all sets of tees have been rated for both genders. This means that, should we wish, competitions could be played off any set of tees by either gender.

HANDICAP INDEX

Currently we all have both an exact handicap, expressed to one decimal point (12.4) and a playing handicap rounded to nearest whole number (12). In addition, providing we have played at least three qualifying competitions in the past 12-months, our handicap is considered a 'competition handicap' and shown thus – 12c. Under the WHS this will be

replaced by your HANDICAP INDEX, which will be computed as the average of your best eight of your last 20 qualifying scores. During September 2020 England Golf, will calculate everyone's HANDICAP INDEX by looking at your last 20 qualifying scores posted since 1st January 2018. They will recalculate those scores against the COURSE & SLOPE RATINGS to give your SCORE DIFFERENTIAL, then average the best eight SCORE DIFFERENTIALS to identify your '*fully developed*' HANDICAP INDEX. If you not have submitted 20 scores since 2018 don't panic, England Golf will look at the scores you have submitted and issue you a '*partially developed*' HANDICAP INDEX based on the lesser number of cards (e.g. if 18 cards have been submitted the HANDICAP INDEX would be based on the average of the best six cards, and if you have submitted only nine cards your HANDICAP INDEX will be calculated as the average of the best three cards). New golfers looking to obtain their HANDICAP INDEX 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, this will continue to be built until the 20-scores are achieved. The maximum HANDICAP INDEX for any player is 54.

What can I expect as my HANDICAP INDEX?

While there are no hard and fast rules of what any player, or group of players can expect, studies have suggested that players up to six handicap could expect to see their HANDICAP INDEX up to a shot lower than their current handicap, while those between seven and 12 could be more volatile, moving up to one shot in either direction. Those above 12 are likely to see their HANDICAP INDEX higher than their current handicap by increasing amounts the higher your handicap is. The players long term performances will also be a factor with players of declining ability (those who have been rising steadily over a period of time) likely to go up more than the steadier players because currently handicaps have only increased by 0.1 each time.

COURSE HANDICAP

Your HANDICAP INDEX is based against the neutral SLOPE RATING of 113 and each time you play you will need to calculate your COURSE HANDICAP, which is specific to the course and particular set of tees you are playing from. In the example below I have used a player with a HANDICAP INDEX of 12.4 who is going to play St Austell GC off the White tees (SLOPE RATING = 124):

HANDICAP INDEX (12.4) x SLOPE RATING (124) /113 = 13.6 therefore their COURSE HANDICAP off the White tee is 14

Now, let us take the same player playing from the Yellow tees (SLOPE RATING = 122):

HANDICAP INDEX (12.4) x SLOPE RATING (122) / 113 = 13.4 therefore their COURSE HANDICAP off the Yellow tees is 13

These examples show what can happen at the same golf course off different sets of tees with a difference of only two in their SLOPE RATINGS. The table below shows how the same player would fare on courses with SLOPE RATINGS from 101 to 139 (odd numbers only):

Slope	Course Handicap	Slope	Course Handicap	Slope	Course Handicap	Slope	Course Handicap
101	11.1 (11)	111	12.2 (12)	121	13.3 (13)	131	14.4 (14)
103	11.3 (11)	113	12.4 (12)	123	13.5 (14)	133	14.6 (15)
105	11.5 (12)	115	12.6 (13)	125	13.7 (14)	135	14.8 (15)
107	11.7 (12)	117	12.8 (13)	127	13.9 (14)	137	15.0 (15)
109	12.0 (12)	119	13.1 (13)	129	14.2 (14)	139	15.3 (15)

Whilst this may seem complicated and time consuming there is some good news, charts will be available around the club and on the first tee so all you will need to do is look up your HANDICAP INDEX, check the set of tees you are playing from, and there will be your COURSE HANDICAP.

PLAYING HANDICAP

The final calculation to make is to establish your PLAYING HANDICAP for the match or competition you are playing in. This is done in the same way you do now, although some of the recommended allowances have changed as the table below shows:

Format of Play	Type of Round	Format	Recommended Allowance
Stroke Play	Individual	Medal	95%
		Stableford	95%
		Bogey	95%
	Fourball	Medal	85%
		Stableford	85%
		Bogey	90%
	Foursomes	Any Format	50% combined
Greensomes	60% low + 40% high		
Team	2 from 4	85%	
Match Play	Individual		100%
	Foursomes	50% difference of combined handicaps	
	Fourball		90%

The most obvious changes here are with individual stroke play competitions, which change from full handicap to 95%, and fourball stroke play which will now be 85%. There are no changes to match play allowances. When filling out your scorecard your HANDICAP INDEX is the required element.

ACCEPTABLE SCORES FOR HANDICAP PURPOSES

There are two categories of acceptable scores:

1. Competition Scores – scores in all competitions of individual stroke play and stableford over a qualifying measured course from a tee with a COURSE & SLOPE RATING.
2. General Play Scores – scores in non-competition and social golf can be used but pre-registration is required in the same way as supplementary scores now. These cards can be over 9 or 18-holes.

Scores from team and match play formats are currently excluded in England. However, if you are playing under another jurisdiction, e.g. in Spain, Portugal, etc and the format is authorised in that jurisdiction then that is an ACCEPTABLE CARD FOR HANDICAP PURPOSES and should be submitted as the table below shows:

	Format Authorised at Home	Format Unauthorised at Home
Round Played Away in Authorised Format	YES	YES
Round Played Away in Unauthorised Format	YES	NO

YES = Submit Score **NO** = Not Acceptable

SUBMITTING SCORES

As soon as possible after the completion of your round you must post your score electronically using the PSI screen or the Mobile Score Input on the How Did I Do app. (Note, different means of score submission may be necessary during this period of coronavirus.) Competitions will be finalised as soon as possible after the last card has been submitted, however, your HANDICAP INDEX will not be updated until just after midnight. This is because the final calculation will include all cards submitted from all rounds of golf played on that day and allow time for the computer to make the PLAYING CONDITIONS CALCULATION.

PLAYING CONDITIONS CALCULATION

This adjustment is made automatically by the software to take account of abnormal course or weather conditions. It looks at all the scores submitted on the course for that day and determines if the course or weather conditions on the day differed from the 'normal'. This is a bit like the current CSS adjustment but will be more conservative in nature.

ADJUSTMENTS TO HANDICAP INDEX

Currently a good score results in a much bigger downward adjustment than the increase for a poor score, and a period of poor play only receives a 0.1 increase in handicap for each poor score. Under the WHS this will be vastly different both up and down. Your HANDICAP INDEX will be the average of your best eight out of the last 20 ACCEPTABLE SCORES. It is recalculated each time a new score is returned and could lead to quite a swing. Upward movement of the HANDICAP INDEX within a defined period will be capped to limit the rate of increase during a period of poor form. For handicap purposes, a big score will be reduced to a nett double bogey, and there are also procedures in place to deal with exceptional scores. It is also important that all cards are returned as complete as possible. No returns in medal play are inevitable, however, the no return is generally the result of one bad hole so, to ensure your HANDICAP INDEX is calculated as accurately as possible, please ensure the scores are submitted for the remainder of the holes.

ENGLAND GOLF – WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS) PRIVACY NOTICE

As part of the roll out of the WHS, England Golf have issued a privacy notice explaining how they collect and processes the personal data of its members, of which we are all one. This notice can be viewed by clicking on the following link:

https://i.emlfiles4.com/cmpdoc/6/5/5/8/1/2/files/64283_world-handicap-system-whs-privacy-notice.pdf?utm_campaign=1540993_16.09.20%20%20World%20Handicap%20System%20%20ISV%20Privacy%20Notice&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20England%20Golf%20Union%20Limited&dm_i=4ON0,X11D,31L4R0,43AFV,1

England Golf have also advised that they will also require both an email address and date of birth of the member in order to issue their HANDICAP INDEX.

I hope this guide goes some way to explaining the WHS, if further information on how it works is required it can be found at: <https://www.englandgolf.org/whs/golfers/>

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