

Simplified Change Summaries

Explanation for Each Major Change

1. Course Rating and Slope Rating	
Old:	The USGA Course Rating System was the foundation of the USGA Handicap System and allowed each player's Handicap Index to be transported from one course to another.
New:	The USGA Course Rating System is now referred to as the Course Rating System and joins the <i>Rules of Handicapping</i> to form the World Handicap System.
Why it matters:	The Course Rating System is implemented by National Associations and allows a player's Handicap Index to be portable from course to course and country to country. This provides an accurate and consistent measure of the difficulty of a golf course by ensuring that playing length and obstacle factors are evaluated the same way worldwide.

2. Number of Scores Required to Obtain a Handicap Index	
Old:	A Handicap Index was issued to a player after five 18-hole scores were submitted and a revision took place.
New:	A Handicap Index is issued to a player the day after they have posted scores from a total of 54 holes, made up of any combination of 9-hole and 18-hole scores.
Why it matters:	This makes it easier to get a Handicap Index and enables as many golfers as possible the opportunity to establish and maintain one.

3. Basis of Handicap Index Calculation	
Old:	When a score was submitted, it was converted to a Handicap Differential based on the Course Rating and Slope Rating of the tees that were played. Used the average of <u>10</u> best differentials out of most recent 20, and the result was multiplied by .96.
New:	When a score is submitted, it is converted to a Score Differential based on the Course Rating and Slope Rating of the tees that were played. In addition, a Playing Conditions Calculation is included to account for any abnormal course or weather conditions. The Handicap Index calculation uses the average of the <u>8</u> best Score Differentials out of the most recent 20 - with safeguards added to prevent extreme upward movement (see #4) and automatically reduce a Handicap Index if an exceptional score is posted (see #5).
Why it matters:	An 8 of 20 system allows for greater responsiveness to good scores and eliminates the need for a bonus for excellence. Safeguards add integrity to the system and support Handicap Committees.

4. Limit on Upward Movement of a Handicap Index (Cap)	
Old:	There was no restriction on the upward movement of a Handicap Index built into the calculation.
New:	A "Soft Cap" and "Hard Cap" is included within the Handicap Index calculation. The Soft Cap slows upward movement by 50% if a 3.0 stroke increase takes place within a year. The Hard Cap prevents upward movement beyond 5.0 strokes.
Why it matters:	There's no limit on the amount by which a player's Handicap Index can decrease, but the Soft Cap and Hard Cap ensure that a temporary loss of form doesn't cause a player's Handicap Index to increase to a level inconsistent with their demonstrated ability.

WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM



5. Exceptional Score Reduction (ESR)	
Old:	When a player submitted two or more Tournament Scores (T-scores) within a 12-month period that were at least 3.0 strokes better than their Handicap Index, they were eligible for an automatic Handicap Index reduction.
New:	When a player submits a score that produces a Score Differential of 7.0 strokes or more below their Handicap Index, they are subject to an Exceptional Score Reduction. If the Score Differential is 7.0 to 9.9 strokes better, a -1.0 reduction takes place. If the Score Differential is 10.0+ strokes better, a -2.0 adjustment takes place.
Why it matters:	By considering all scores, a player's Handicap Index is more responsive to exceptional performances in competitive and recreational play. The adjustment is straight-forward and applied automatically.

6. Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC)	
Old:	There was no calculation or adjustment to account for abnormal course or weather conditions.
New:	When abnormal course or weather conditions cause scores to be unusually high or low on a given day, a "Playing Conditions Calculation" (PCC) adjusts Score Differentials to better reflect a player's actual performance.
Why it matters:	Provides a mechanism to adjust the Score Differential when playing conditions for the day are abnormal. PCC can also be used to identify if the Course Rating of a golf course needs to be reviewed by the local Authorized Golf Association.

7. Frequency of Handicap Index Updates	
Old:	A Handicap Index was updated on the 1 st and 15 th of each month.
New:	A player's Handicap Index is now updated daily, provided that the player posted a score the day before.
Why it matters:	Provides players with a more responsive and up-to-date Handicap Index. This also allows new golfers to establish their first Handicap Index more quickly.

8. Maximum Handicap Index	
Old:	The maximum Handicap Index was 36.4 for men and 40.4 for women.
New:	The maximum Handicap Index for all golfers is 54.0.
Why It Matters:	Many players without a Handicap Index believe they are "not good enough." With a higher maximum Handicap Index, the WHS strives to make the game more welcoming to new players, while keeping the interest of aging players where their ability diminishes over time.

9. Importance and Determination of Par	
Old:	Par had little significance because a Course Handicap represented the number of strokes a player received in order to play to the Course Rating of the tees being played – not Par.
New:	Par has an important role within the World Handicap System, requiring Par values to be more precise. The local Authorized Golf Association determines Par based on yardage and effective playing length guidelines – while also considering how the hole was designed to be played.
Why it matters:	The Course Handicap calculation includes a Course Rating minus Par adjustment, which enables a Course Handicap to represent the number of strokes a player receives to play to the Par of the tees being played. Additionally, the maximum hole score for handicap purposes is a "Net Double Bogey," equal to Double Bogey + any handicap strokes the player receives on the hole. Also, when a player does not play a hole, "Net Par" must be recorded as their score for the hole. Net Par is equal to Par + any handicap strokes the player receives. Both procedures benefit from more accurate Par values.

10. Course Handicap Calculation and Application	
Old:	Course Handicap = Handicap Index × (Slope Rating ÷ 113)
New:	Course Handicap = Handicap Index × (Slope Rating ÷ 113) + (Course Rating - Par)
Why it matters:	<p>Under the WHS, Course Handicap values change more from tee to tee, as they represent the number of strokes needed to play to Par.</p> <p>This new calculation also allows players to compete from different tees without any adjustment - unless a difference in Par exists.</p> <p>Players are now able to determine their Target Scores (the score they'll shoot if they play to their handicap) by simply adding their Course Handicap + Par.</p>

11. Playing Handicap Calculation and Application	
Old:	When a player's Course Handicap was adjusted based on the application of a Handicap Allowance or other term(s) of a competition, it was still referred to as a Course Handicap.
New:	The term "Playing Handicap" represents the actual number of strokes a player gives or receives for the round being played. The Course Handicap and Playing Handicap are typically the same value. However, when Handicap Allowances are used or Par is different between tees, there is an adjustment to make the competition equitable.
Why it matters:	There is now a clear distinction between two definitions, where both serve specific purposes. A Course Handicap is used to adjust individual hole scores (Net Double Bogey and Net Par procedures). A Playing Handicap denotes the actual number of strokes given or received during a recreational or competitive round and is used for the purposes of the competition.

12. Maximum Hole Score for Handicap Purposes (Net Double Bogey)	
Old:	The maximum hole score for handicap purposes was based on a player's Course Handicap and the Equitable Stroke Control (ESC) table.
New:	The maximum hole score for each player is limited to a Net Double Bogey, equal to Double Bogey + any handicap strokes received (based on the player's Course Handicap).
Why it matters:	By factoring in Par and Stroke Index values under the Net Double Bogey procedure, adjusted hole scores are more precise and reflective of each player's demonstrated ability.

13. Treatment of 9-Hole Scores	
Old:	To post a nine-hole score, a player must have played 7 to 12 holes under the Rules of Golf. When 13 or more holes were played, the score posted qualified as an 18-hole score. A player could have a Handicap Index and/or a nine-hole Handicap Index (N).
New:	To post a nine-hole score, a player must play 7 to 13 holes under the Rules of Golf. When 14 or more holes are played, the score posted qualifies as an 18-hole score. A nine-hole Handicap Index (N) no longer exists.
Why it matters:	<p>Players around the world now have a single Handicap Index, and there is no longer a nine-hole Handicap Index (N).</p> <p>The method for calculating a Handicap Index is the same worldwide, and this applies whether a player submits all 9-hole scores, 18-hole scores, or a combination of both. The Handicap Index is interchangeable for both 9-hole and 18-hole play.</p>