

Handicap Committee Manual

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Contents

- I. Background
- II. Committee Role and Responsibilities
- III. Member Responsibilities
- IV. Handicap Audit Process
- V. Special Events Handicap Verification
- VI. Handicap Resources
 - a. USGA Rules of Handicapping Handicap Committee information
 - b. USGA Rules of Handicapping Appendix D - Handicap Review

I. Background

The purpose of the Handicap Committee is to ensure LPGA Amateurs Columbus maintains a solid reputation of integrity and good standing within the Central Ohio and LPGA Amateurs golfing communities by:

- Promoting the use of accurate handicaps within the membership for both social and competitive events
- Enforcing policies of USGA handicap and setting policies and expectations for members with regard to keeping a valid handicap
- Educating members on how to establish and maintain a handicap
- Ensuring and auditing member compliance with USGA handicapping rules and club expectations

II. Committee Role and Responsibilities

The Handicap Committee is made up of a chair and 2-3 members in good standing with an understanding of handicapping and a history of maintaining a personal handicap. Members are recommended by the Golf Services Director and appointed by the Board. The committee reports to the Golf Services Director who is a de-facto member of the committee.

A Handicap Chairperson is identified from the committee members to serve as key contact for the committee and to ensure all required activities are completed as outlined. This individual provides periodic updates to the Golf Services Director.



A Handicap Advisory Committee may periodically be convened to assist and advise the committee on handicap issues and topics.

The Handicap Committee responsibilities include:

- Encouraging use of handicaps for both competitive events and for personal development
- Assisting members in the resolution of handicap issues
- Educating members on rules and handicap topics
- Auditing member handicap compliance and addressing non-compliance issues
- Administering consequences for non-compliance issues
- Verifying player handicaps for special events

III. Member Responsibilities

Any member holding a USGA GHIN handicap is expected to have a current handicap and comply with the [*USGA Rules of Handicapping*](#). Competitive play requires a current handicap and includes, but is not limited to: chapter competitive leagues & events, LPGA National Association CUP and Championship events, Columbus District Golf Association events & CUP team and any other competition requiring a handicap.

As club members, players represent not only themselves but the LPGA Amateurs Columbus chapter and are expected to act with integrity and honesty in all situations.

According to the [*USGA Rules of Handicapping*](#) a player is expected to:

- Act with integrity by following the *Rules of Handicapping* and to refrain from using, or circumventing, the *Rules of Handicapping* for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage,
- Attempt to make the best score possible at each hole,
- Submit *all scores* from acceptable forms of play (*excludes whenever player does not play own ball / shot: e.g., Scramble, Chapman*)
 - ❖ to provide reasonable evidence of demonstrated ability
 - ❖ as soon as possible after the round is completed
 - ❖ and before midnight local time
- Play by the *Rules of Golf*,
- Certify the scores of fellow players

IV. Member Support

The Handicap Committee is equipped with tools to administer member handicap accounts and can assist members with administrative tasks such as establishing a GHIN handicap account through the

Ohio Golf Association, updating scoring and course information, deleting erroneous scores, etc. Each January the committee facilitates the process of renewing GHIN handicap accounts through the Ohio Golf Association.

The committee is also available to investigate concerns raised by members regarding their own handicap or that of another member. Members should keep in mind that a handicap is not confidential, it is meant to be shared openly with other players.

To grow member awareness and knowledge, the committee makes articles and links to handicapping information available to club members through the chapter website and the monthly newsletter. The Handicap Committee can be contacted by using the email link on the LPGA Amateurs Columbus website.

V. Handicap Audit Process

At least annually the Handicap Committee will conduct an audit of the scored record of ALL members participating in competitive leagues & events. This audit includes club members with a handicap through LPGA Amateurs Columbus and those with handicaps through other courses and organizations. This audit is to be conducted mid-season to allow adequate time in the season for players to have scores posted. If warranted the committee will conduct subsequent audits on the full roster or a select subset. Per USGA rules, a handicap review may be conducted anytime at the request of a player.

Key items related to the audit include, but are not limited to:

- a reasonable number of scores posted
- accurate scores based on tee played or slope & rating for tees
- all scores entered for leagues and events played
- all scores posted by midnight on the day of play

Although the accuracy of scores is very difficult to audit, the committee will investigate concerns raised. As a common practice players should share scores with fellow players at the completion of each hole as they play so questions can be addressed in real time.

A player's handicap is considered to be in compliance if no issues are found.

Out of compliance issues include but are not limited to:

- not posting scores,
- posting scores late,
- posting inaccurate scores,



COLUMBUS, OH

constantly playing in formats that cannot be posted
not playing with or sharing scores with other club members

For those whose handicap appears to be out of compliance the player will be contacted via email with at least 3 days to respond. The email will outline the issue and committee findings, any planned penalty, and the time frame for both member response and Handicap Committee action. The player may ask the committee for clarification of the issue & evidence or provide additional information for consideration by the committee. If the player does not respond by the date set in the email, the Handicap Committee will proceed with any planned action and inform the player via email that the action has been completed. While many issues have a simple explanation such as a new member needing education on league or handicap processes or a member not playing due to injury, all issues should follow this procedure.

For serious issues such as those that appear to be for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage, a Handicap Advisory Group may be engaged by the Handicap Committee to investigate the infraction and advise on the penalty. This group may include club members and LPGA Amateur National Association personnel. Actions and penalties will be based on the seriousness of the offense and include, but are not limited to:

1st Offense –

- Warning letter
- Handicap penalty adjustment – amount & duration will be determined based on the nature of the issue. When the member handicap is managed by another club that club will be contacted regarding the infraction with a request to adjust the handicap.
- Possible exclusion from all or select LPGA Amateurs Columbus and LPGA Amateur National Association handicapped events.

2nd Offense –

- Handicap withdrawal – duration will be determined based on the nature of the issue.
- Possible LPGA Amateurs Columbus membership termination

The Handicap Committee will maintain a spreadsheet documenting audit issues which tracks:

- date of audit,
- player name,
- issue identified
- date/time frame of concern,
- player response,

- committee actions

Members who have exhibited issues with handicap compliance, will continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis by the committee.

VI. Special Event Handicap Verification

In most cases the use of Golf Genius will be sufficient to verify handicaps for LPGA Amateur Columbus events. For select events such as the Women's Open the Handicap & Chapter Championship the Handicap Committee may be engaged to verify member and non-member handicaps. Events requesting handicap verification by the committee must first do the following:

- Determine acceptable handicap sources – *the committee highly recommends that GHIN handicaps be required.*
- Define the event's handicap requirements such as individual/team handicap limits or number of scores required in the current season
- Establish a handicap cutoff date, agreed to with the committee, to provide time for the verification and any follow-up
- Define player substitution and individual/team withdrawal rules should a player or team be denied play due to handicap issues

Once the above is agreed to, the committee will use GHIN Administrative Reports & USGA GHIN Lookup to review and evaluate each handicap. Any concerns or issues will be communicated back to the event coordinator for decisions & action.

VII. Handicap Resources

The Handicap Committee uses the following resources to complete their tasks.

- USGA Online Tools
 - USGA Rules of Handicapping
<https://www.usga.org/handicapping/roh/2020-rules-of-handicapping.html>
 - USGA Rules of Golf
<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules/rules-2019/rules-of-golf/rules-and-interpretations.html#!ruletype=pe§ion=rule&rulenum=1>
 - USGA Handicap Committee Guide
<https://www.usga.org/content/dam/usga/pdf/USGA-Handicap-Committee-Guide.pdf>
- LPGA Amateurs HQ Handicap expert - Jeanne Biggerstaff, Senior Coordinator



COLUMBUS, OH

- Ohio Golf Association Executive Director, Matt Leffert, Columbus District Golf Association
- USGA Admin Portal for GHIN service

a. USGA Rules of Handicapping - Handicap Committee

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/handicapping/roh/Content/rules/7%201%20Handicap%20Committee.htm>

7.1 Handicap Committee

7.1a Conducting a Handicap Review and Adjusting a Handicap Index

Conducting a Handicap Review. The *Handicap Committee* should conduct a review of a player's *Handicap Index* using the procedures set out in [Appendix D: Handicap Review](#).

- It is strongly recommended that the *Handicap Committee* conduct a *handicap review* annually.
- A *handicap review* may be conducted at the request of the player or another player at any time.
- Before making any adjustment to a player's *Handicap Index*, the *Handicap Committee* should carefully consider all available evidence, including:
 - Whether the player's scoring potential has been affected by a temporary or permanent injury or illness which is significant enough to impact the player's ability to play with or against all other players on a fair and equal basis.
 - Any handicap(s) previously held by the player.
 - Whether the player's ability is rapidly improving or declining.
 - Whether the player is performing significantly differently in one format of play compared to another, for example between organized competitions and *general play*; unauthorized and *authorized format of play*.
 - Where it has been determined that a player's actions are for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage.

Adjusting a Handicap Index. In considering all of the available evidence, the *Handicap Committee* must decide the most appropriate course of action for any adjustment to a player's *Handicap Index*, which can be either:

- Resetting the *Handicap Index* by applying an adjustment to each of the most recent 20 *Score Differentials* in the *scoring record*, to achieve the chosen *Handicap Index* that is determined to better reflect the player's demonstrated ability.
 - This will allow for the *Handicap Index* to be updated as new scores are posted.
 - If fewer than 20 scores are recorded on a player's *scoring record* the adjustment is applied to all recorded *Score Differentials*.
 - The *Handicap Committee* can remove the adjustment at any time if the adjustment is determined to no longer be warranted.

Or

- Freezing the *Handicap Index* at a level selected by the *Handicap Committee* for a defined period of time.
 - During this period, a player's *Handicap Index* will not be updated as new scores are posted unless the *Handicap Committee* has determined to freeze only against upward movement.
 - The *Handicap Committee* can remove the freeze upon the *Handicap Index* at any time and the scores in the player's *scoring record* will be used to calculate the player's *Handicap Index*.

Any adjustment to a player's *Handicap Index* resulting from a *handicap review* must:

- Be applied only after the player has been informed and has had an opportunity to respond to the *Handicap Committee* or, where appropriate, the *Authorized Association*.
- Be a minimum of 1 stroke, upward or downward.
- Only increase a player's *Handicap Index* by up to 5.0 strokes above the player's *Low Handicap Index*, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances

could include a player who has a long-term illness or injury preventing them from playing golf at the level previously attained.

Rule 7.1a Interpretations:

7.1a/1 – Resetting a Player’s Handicap Index by Adjusting the Most Recent 20 Score Differentials

Applying an adjustment to each of the most recent 20 *Score Differentials* in the player’s *scoring record* will ensure that the impact of the adjustment remains after the next score is submitted, gradually diluting as more scores are submitted.

As an example, a player has a *Handicap Index* of 10.3 and the *Handicap Committee* decides to adjust this to 9.3 because recent scores suggest that the player is rapidly improving.

Using this example, the *Handicap Committee* would apply a -1 adjustment to each of the most recent 20 *Score Differentials* and the impact of this adjustment on the final calculation is illustrated in the tables below:

7.1a/2 – Handicap Committee Applied Adjustment For Injured Player Must Be Based On Scores Made After Injury

The *Handicap Committee* should only consider adjusting a player’s *Handicap Index* for injury after one or more *acceptable scores* have been submitted after the injury occurred. In determining the level of any adjustment, the *Handicap Committee* should take into consideration the scores submitted after the injury and the nature and severity of the injury.

After a number of scores have been submitted and it becomes evident that the injury has caused a permanent change to the player’s ability, it may be appropriate to disregard the player’s *scoring record* and allocate a *Handicap Index* using only the scores submitted since the injury (see Rule [5.2a For Fewer Than 20 Scores](#)).

7.1b Applying a Penalty Score

In a situation where a player fails to submit a score from an *authorized format of play* in a timely manner, the *Handicap Committee* should investigate the reason and take appropriate action.

If There is a Valid Reason For a Score Not Having Been Submitted. The *Handicap Committee* of the player's *home club* has the authority to determine whether a player's reason for not submitting a score is a valid reason.

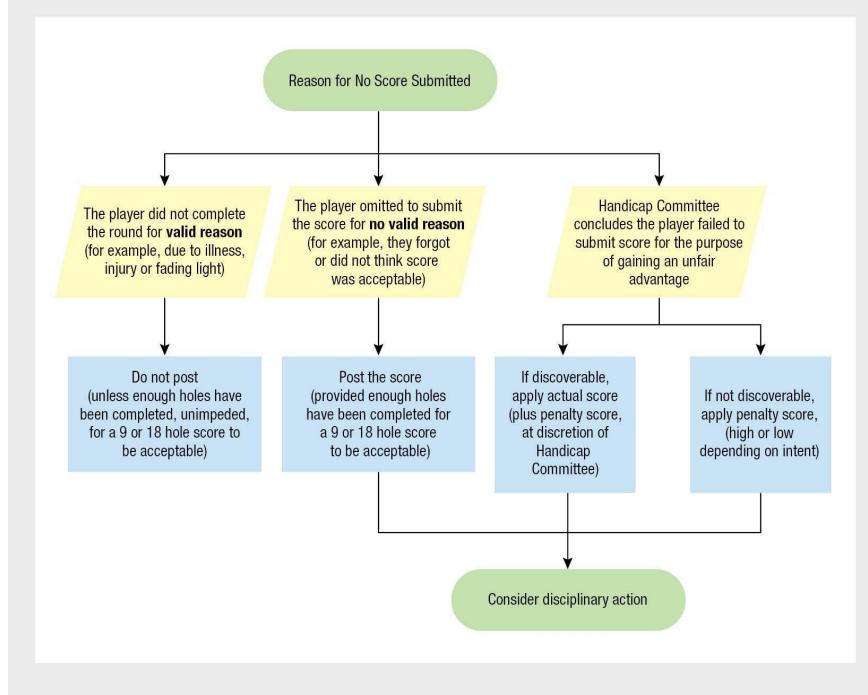
- Valid reasons for not submitting a score can include:
 - Sudden injury or illness,
 - Emergency,
 - Dangerous weather conditions, or
 - Any other reason for stopping play that is considered valid by the *Handicap Committee*.
- When the *home club* or the Committee considers that a player has a valid reason for not completing a round, there are two options:
 - **Option 1 – The score must be posted.** If the player does not complete their round but has completed the minimum number of holes determined by the *Authorized Association* for an acceptable 9-hole or 18-hole score, the score must be posted for handicap purposes.
 - **Option 2 – The score must not be posted.** If the player does not complete their round and has not completed the minimum number of holes determined by the *Authorized Association* for an acceptable 9-hole or 18-hole score, the score must not be posted for handicap purposes.

If There is No Valid Reason For a Score Not Having Been Submitted. The Committee has the authority to determine whether a player's reason for not submitting a score is a valid reason.

- Invalid reasons for not submitting a score can include:
 - Preventing a low score from causing a *Handicap Index* to decrease.
 - Preventing a high score from causing a *Handicap Index* to increase.
- If the player's score is identifiable and they stopped their round after having completed at least the minimum number of holes determined by the *Authorized Association* for an acceptable 9-hole or 18-hole score, the score should be posted for handicap purposes.
- Where a *Handicap Committee* subsequently becomes aware of the score the player actually had after it has already posted a *penalty score*, the actual score should also be posted to the player's *scoring record*. The *Handicap Committee* has discretion to leave the *penalty score* on the player's *scoring record* or to remove it.
- If the *Handicap Committee* concludes that a player failed to submit a score for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage, it should consider withdrawing the player's *Handicap Index*, and/or applying an appropriate *penalty score* (high or low depending on intent).
- The *Handicap Committee* or the *Authorized Association* should consider disciplinary procedures for players who repeatedly fail to submit their scores or who fail to complete rounds.

(See Diagram 7.1b.)

DIAGRAM 7.1b: ACTIONS AVAILABLE TO HANDICAP COMMITTEE WHEN NO SCORE IS SUBMITTED



7.1c Withdrawing a Handicap Index

The *Handicap Committee*, or *Authorized Association*, should withdraw the *Handicap Index* of a player who deliberately or repeatedly fails to comply with the player's responsibilities under the *Rules of Handicapping* (see [Appendix A: Rights and Responsibilities](#)).

- The withdrawal of a player's *Handicap Index* should be applied only after the player has been informed and has had an opportunity to respond to the *Handicap Committee*, *Authorized Association*, or other disciplinary panel.
- A player must be notified of the length of time their *Handicap Index* will be withdrawn and any additional conditions.

7.1d Reinstating a Handicap Index

Reinstatement of a player's *Handicap Index* will be required after a player's *Handicap Index* has been withdrawn for a period of time.

To determine the level of *Handicap Index* at which the player is to be reinstated, the *Handicap Committee* may wish to consider:

- Reinstating the *Handicap Index* at a level that the *Handicap Committee* feels is currently reflective of the player's demonstrated ability,
- Allocating a *Handicap Index* as if the player were new to the sport, or
- Reinstating the last recorded *Handicap Index*.

It is strongly recommended that, after a player's *Handicap Index* has been reinstated, the *Handicap Committee* should monitor the player's *Handicap Index* closely over subsequent rounds and, where required, make appropriate adjustments.

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/handicapping/roh/Content/rules/Appendix%20D%20Handicap%20Review.htm>

b. USGA Rules of Handicapping Appendix D: Handicap Review

The *handicap review* process gives a *Handicap Committee* the ability to ensure the *Handicap Index* of a player reflects their demonstrated ability. It is strongly recommended that a *Handicap Committee* conduct a *handicap review* at least annually for all *members* who have designated that *golf club* as their *home club*.

- The World Handicap System software specifications will recommend reports and notifications to assist *Handicap Committees* to identify those players who require a *handicap review*. A review can be conducted annually or as otherwise necessary.
- A player must be made aware of, and be given the opportunity to contribute towards, the *handicap review* process to the extent practicable and must have recourse to an appeals procedure, if requested.

The *handicap review* can be initiated by:

- The *Authorized Association*'s requirement for affiliated *golf clubs* within their *jurisdiction* to conduct an annual *handicap review* for all players who hold a *Handicap Index*.
- The *Handicap Committee* wishing to review the handicap of a player who is consistently returning scores that do not reflect their demonstrated ability.
- The player requesting a *handicap review* following a period where they feel their scoring returns do not align with their current *Handicap Index*.

When conducting a *handicap review*, the *Handicap Committee* might consider:

- The player's *scoring record* history.
- The trend of the player's *Handicap Index*, such as differences in a player's *Handicap Index* over the past 12-24 months.
- Deviations from the expected scoring performance for the player.
- Frequency of score submissions in the past 12 months versus previous 12-month cycles.
- Comparison of average *Score Differentials* between competitive and casual rounds.
- Comparison of average *Score Differentials* in match play versus stroke play formats of play.
- Comparison of average *Score Differentials* in individual versus team formats of play.

COLUMBUS, OH

- Any scores from, or performances known, in non-*authorized formats of play*.
- Any other knowledge that the *Handicap Committee* has relative to the player's golfing ability. For example, improving play following golf lessons, declining scoring potential due to frequency of playing, ageing, incapacitating injuries or illness, etc.
- Percentage of *acceptable scores* submitted at a player's *home club*.
- Percentage of *acceptable scores* submitted from casual round formats.
- Percentage of *acceptable scores* from 9-hole rounds.
- Identifying relevant handicapping trends for *Handicap Committee* consideration.
- Length of time since a player last played to their *Handicap Index*.
- Number of scores since a player last played to their *Handicap Index*.
- Information supplied by any other *golf club* where the player is a *member*.