



Change Summaries  
for the  
2024 World Handicap System™ Revision

Each of these one-page documents explain a major change for the 2024 revision for the Rules of Handicapping™ and Course Rating System™. The papers describe:

- The policy used prior to the 2024 revision of the WHS™ (2020-2023),
- The Rule change for the 2024 revision of the WHS, and
- The reasons for the change.

The following papers are included:

#	Topic
1	<a href="#">Treatment of 9-hole Scores</a>
2	<a href="#">Treatment of Scores When 10 to 17 Holes are Played</a>
3	<a href="#">Minimum Length to Obtain a Course Rating™ and Slope Rating™</a>
4	<a href="#">Additional Handicap Review Tools for Club Use</a>

# 1

## Treatment of 9-Hole Scores

*Rule prior to the 2024 revision:* For a 9-hole score to be acceptable for handicap purposes, a player is required to play at least 7 holes under the Rules of Golf and can apply net par for any holes not played.

Once a 9-hole score is posted, a 9-hole Score Differential™ is created, and either:

- Combined with an existing 9-hole Score Differential (if available) to produce an 18-hole Score Differential, OR
- Combined with the player's next 9-hole Score Differential to produce an 18-hole Score Differential.

*Rule change for the 2024 Revision:* For a 9-hole score to be acceptable for handicap purposes, a player must play all 9 holes from tees with a published 9-hole Course Rating™ and Slope Rating™.

When a player posts a 9-hole score, the WHS™ will automatically calculate an 18-hole Score Differential for the round, based on the player's 9-hole Score Differential and expected Score Differential based on their current Handicap Index®, allowing the 9-hole round to be considered in the player's Handicap Index calculation right away.

The player's Handicap Index is used to determine their expected Score Differential for the number of holes not played.

Expected score is defined as: The score a player is expected to achieve over a specified number of holes on a course of standard difficulty. It is calculated using the player's Handicap Index and attributes a numerical value against any hole or holes not played during a round.

### Reasons for change:

- This treatment of 9-hole scores is more responsive since players will no longer have to wait for a second 9-hole score to be posted for an 18-hole Score Differential to be created and used in their Handicap Index calculation.
- It provides a better representation of how a player will normally perform over 18 holes on a given day, compared to combined 9-hole scores made on different days and under different playing conditions.
- This method produces a more consistent and comparable Handicap Index for those who post 9-hole scores. For example, prior to 2024:
  - Combining two independent 9-hole scores often results in more volatility with the Score Differentials and is highly dependent on the order in which scores were combined.
  - It is also common for two good 9-hole scores to be combined and produce an 18-hole Score Differential that is better than any of their 18-hole scores made over 18 consecutive holes. The impact of this scenario could lead to an artificially low Handicap Index for the player.

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## Treatment of Scores When 10 to 17 Holes Are Played

*Rule prior to the 2024 Revision:* When 10 to 13 holes are played, scores made on holes 10 through 13 are discarded and a 9-hole Score Differential™ is created from the scores on the 9 holes played. When 14-17 holes are played, net par is used for the remaining holes not played to allow an 18-hole Score Differential to be created.

*Rule change for the 2024 Revision:* When 10-17 holes are played, a Score Differential will be created based on the holes played, and the player's expected Score Differential for the number of remaining holes will be added to that value to produce an 18-hole Score Differential.

- To facilitate this change, when a player plays between 10-17 holes, they will be required to post their scores using the hole-by-hole option. This allows a Score Differential to be calculated based on the specific holes that were played, which is then combined with the player's expected score for the number of holes not played.
  - Net par will still be available for limited use where practical, and at the discretion of the Handicap or Competition Committee, however, expected score will be used as the default position for holes not played.

### Reasons for change:

- Prior to 2024, scores made on holes 10-13 are discarded if fewer than 14 holes are played. This change adds flexibility by allowing scores made on those holes to be retained and used to create an 18-hole Score Differential.
- By replacing net par with the use of a player's expected score to produce an 18-hole Score Differential, players will see more equity and consistency. This is because the expected score for a player is not course-specific or reliant upon the course's stroke index allocation.

### **Minimum Length to Obtain a Course Rating™ and Slope Rating™**

*Rule prior to the 2024 Revision:* To be eligible for a Course Rating™ and Slope Rating™, a tee set must be at least 3,000 yards for 18 holes or 1,500 yards for 9 holes.

*Rule change for the 2024 Revision:* The World Handicap System™ has approved lowering the minimum length for a tee to be issued a Course Rating and Slope Rating to 1,500 yards for 18 holes or 750 yards for 9 holes.

- As a result, more than 600 additional golf courses (mostly par-3 courses) qualify for a Course Rating and Slope Rating, if desired.

#### **Reasons for change:**

- Handicap research shows that equity and portability within the system is retained down to the new minimum tee length.
- This change enables scores made at shorter length courses to be acceptable for handicap purposes and allows players with a Handicap Index® to determine a Course Handicap™ and Playing Handicap™ for use during their rounds at such facilities.
- In recent years, more short courses are being built and shorter length tees are being added at full length courses to accommodate players of all abilities.
  - These courses are often played by either beginners or golfers with shorter hitting distances, and this change provides these players the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of maintaining a Handicap Index.
- This change also allows courses that have not previously utilized the WHS™ to create a club structure, affiliate with their local Allied Golf Association, and register golfers for a Handicap Index.

*Rule prior to the 2024 Revision:* The Handicap Committee at a golf club is strongly encouraged to conduct a handicap review at least annually for all members. There are lists of considerations and reports available to assist Handicap Committees with identifying players who may need an adjustment, however, it is up to the Committee to determine if, and how much, the adjustment should be.

*Rule change for the 2024 Revision:* Along with the introduction of additional reporting tools, USGA handicap administration software will include enhanced capabilities including the ability for the software to produce recommended actions for the Handicap Committee.

- The enhanced handicap review tools:
  - Identify abnormalities within a player's scoring record, including the ability to identify players who are frequently scoring above, or below, their expected scoring range, and
  - Make a recommended adjustment to the Handicap Index® of each player identified. The minimum adjustment recommended is 1 stroke, up or down. An adjustment above 3 strokes should only be made under unusual circumstances.

*Reasons for change:*

- By introducing these new data-driven tools, Handicap Committees have the ability add more objectivity and consistency to the Handicap Review process.
- The updated tools include notifications, which allow Handicap Committees to become aware if a Handicap Review indicates a player's Handicap Index no longer reflects their demonstrated ability.
- With more players than ever joining "e-clubs" and the USGA/AGA Community, these reporting tools assist Handicap Committees at clubs where traditional peer review is more difficult to carry out.
- These tools will not replace, but rather enhance the human element that exists today – and the role of the Handicap Committee is still critical to the integrity of the World Handicap System™.