

Handicaps and Score Cards



The Rules of Golf require that the player's handicap must be on the Score Card. Rule 3.3b (4) states that it is the player's responsibility to ensure that the correct handicap is displayed and if it is too high or no handicap is shown, then the player is **disqualified** from the competition. If the handicap shown is too low there is no penalty and the player's net score stands using the lower handicap as shown.

This should be a simple requirement to follow but with Handicap Index, Course Handicap and Playing Handicap to choose from both players and Committees are getting confused as to which one to use and this can result in players being unfairly disqualified from competitions.

Let's unpick these handicaps.

The **Handicap Index** is a measure of a player's demonstrated ability calculated against the Slope Rating of a golf course of **standard** playing difficulty, that is one with a Slope Rating of 113.

The **Course Handicap** is a calculation derived from the Handicap Index and the actual slope of the course and tees being played and is used in the handicap calculation. For each score a player returns, a Score Differential is calculated and the average of the best 8 out of the last 20 score differentials is the player's Handicap Index.

The **Playing Handicap** is determined by the format of the competition being played or the Terms of the Competition. Singles matchplay is 100% whereas Single Strokeplay events are 95% of Course Handicap. Appendix C in the Rules of Handicapping manual lists the mandatory allowances for different formats of play. The Playing Handicap represents the actual number of

strokes the player gives or receives for the round being played and does not form part of the Score Differential calculation.

So of these three 'handicaps' it is the **Course Handicap** which must be shown on the Score Card and which the player must play to, for example in a Stableford competition do not pick up on a hole where there is a handicap shot using Course Handicap but not Playing Handicap. For further clarification refer to Rule 3.3b(4)/1 in the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf effective 2019 transcribed as follows:

In net-score *stroke-play* competitions, it is the player's responsibility to ensure that his or her handicap is shown on the scorecard. "Handicap" means the handicap for the course and tees being played, excluding any handicap allowances as set out within the Terms of the Competition. The *Committee* is responsible for applying any handicap allowances and adjustments.

This requirement is confirmed by G2.1b/1 Handicap on Scorecard in the document Guidance on the WHS Rules of Handicapping as Applied within GB&I produced by CONGU.

If there is space on the score card, then it is useful to show all three handicaps but it is very important that players are advised to write their **Course Handicap** and to play to this, especially when signing in using the computer which invariably advises the player of their Playing Handicap for the event.



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YOU MUST PUT YOUR COURSE HANDICAP ON YOUR SCORE CARD!