

Treatment of 9-Hole Scores under the World Handicap System™

What happens when a 9-hole score is posted for handicap purposes?

When a 9-hole score is posted, the USGA automatically calculates an 18-hole Score Differential™ by combining the player's 9-hole Score Differential with an expected Score Differential based on their current Handicap Index®. This allows the player's Handicap Index to update the day after the 9-hole score is posted.

Score Differential
from 9-holes played

+

9-hole expected
Score Differential

=

18-hole
Score Differential

What is an expected score?

A player's expected score is based on the score a player is expected to achieve on a course of standard difficulty, over the number of holes not played. It is based on the average Score Differential of players with a given Handicap Index and a normal distribution of scores.

An expected score can be thought of as a neutral value. This means that if a player posts a good 9-hole round compared to their ability, the resulting 18-hole Score Differential will also reflect a good performance.

Can you show an example of a 9-hole round display in a scoring record?

- **Your 9-hole score** (e.g., 41)
- **The 9-hole Course Rating™ and Slope Rating®** for these tees played
- **An 18-hole Score Differential**, created by combining:
 - The 9-hole Score Differential from the holes you played
 - A 9-hole expected Score Differential based on your current Handicap Index *(Together, these produce an 18-hole Score Differential of 13.7 in this example)*
- **Score type "N"**, indicating a 9-hole round

Type	Date	Score	C.R./Slope	PCC	Diff
A	7/20/2025	86	69.2/127	—	15.8
N	7/17/2025	41	33.5/119	—	13.7
H	7/10/2025	85	71.5/129	—	11.8

(This graphic is for illustrative purposes and does not represent a full scoring record.)

What are the benefits of this approach to 9-hole scores?

- **Counts toward a player's daily Handicap Index revision** - no need to wait for a second score.
- **Accommodates the modern game** by supporting personal preferences, time limitations, and the popularity of league play.
- **Provides a better indicator of how a player will normally perform over 18 holes on a given day** than combining 9-hole scores from different days, which can introduce volatility to a player's Handicap Index.