

World Handicap System: Inclusive and Accessible

One of the key objectives of the World Handicap System (WHS) is to provide greater enjoyment for all who play the sport by enabling as many golfers as possible to establish and maintain a handicap. Some of the features aimed at achieving this objective include:

- Only a small number of scores required to be submitted to establish an initial handicap;
- A maximum handicap limit of 54.0 for both men and women;
- The potential for scores to be submitted from many different formats of play – giving players plenty of opportunity to submit scores; and
- Being able to accommodate all types of golfers, including those who enjoy competitive, recreational, 9-hole and 18-hole rounds.

These features are designed to make the system more inclusive and accessible for all golfers, while ensuring players of different skillsets can play and compete on a fair and equitable basis regardless of gender, age, ability or experience.

Safeguards will be in place within the system to ensure equity is retained for all formats of play and to help promote an acceptable pace of play. However, club administrators and competition organizers are encouraged to consider what measures might also be appropriate for them to introduce. For example:

- Committees can determine the conditions under which competitions are played and can consider implementing a lower maximum handicap limit for certain competitions. Any limit should be designed to:
 - promote a decent pace of play;
 - protect the interests of all participating golfers; and
 - encourage improving performance.
- Committees might also wish to consider introducing divisions (or flights) or staging separate competitions for higher handicapped players who are not eligible to enter certain events. These could include 9-hole or 18-hole formats, to take place on the same day as other scheduled competitions.
- If a course is simply too long or difficult for some players, it becomes virtually impossible for a player to get around the course in a reasonable amount of time. Golfers should, therefore, be encouraged to play courses and tees that are consistent with their ability, which should also lead to greater enjoyment.
- Because the USGA Course and Slope Rating System will be incorporated under the WHS umbrella, players can decide to play from different tees and still have an equitable game.

Coupled with appropriate handicap controls and measures, these strategies should ensure the game continues to be enjoyable for everyone - from beginners to experienced, competitive players – and evolve to support how the game is played both today and tomorrow.