



Adaptive Golf Handbook
(Updated January 10, 2024)

(This is a living document designed for USA organizations, with a focus on conducting competitions.)

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Adaptive Golf

The USGA was incredibly proud to hold the Inaugural U.S. Adaptive Open in 2022 at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club's Course No. 6. Conducting the first national championship for adaptive players was the culmination of a long journey, featuring years of information sharing, communication, and collaboration across the adaptive golf landscape.

Following the first playing of this new championship, the USGA has received multiple requests from state and regional golf associations as well as other organizations seeking guidance on how to enter this inspiring space and plan adaptive programming. As a result, this handbook was compiled, with the hope that it will help other groups begin their journeys.

Golf truly is a game for all, for a lifetime. It will quickly be observed that the adaptive golf community is a passionate group that relishes the opportunity to play recreationally and compete. The USGA hopes that all golf organizations will have the opportunity to share in this rewarding and inspiring experience.

For Inaugural U.S. Adaptive Open stories, see Videos in the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Observing other Programs/Competitions

Before deciding whether to pursue adaptive golf initiatives it is imperative to observe related activities to determine viability of programming.

To find clinics and competitions in your area, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Competitive Pathway

Most sports offer a competitive pathway. In the examples listed for golf below, each individual will find their comfort and interest level.

- Introduction/clinics/lessons
- Playing a few holes on a short course
- Playing a short course
- Playing a few holes
- Playing 9 holes
- Playing 18 holes
- Keeping score
- Playing recreationally



- Playing competitively
 - Club
 - Local
 - Regional
 - National
 - International

It is recommended that organizations entering the adaptive space begin with offering basic introductory clinics or attending existing clinics. This is not only to learn about adaptive golf but to identify interested players in your area for future competitions. It is recommended that organizations attend existing adaptive golf competitions in their area before organizing their own competition.

For more information, see the Resources section at the end of this Handbook.

[Budget/Fundraising](#)

Following observation and prior to implementation, it is advised to develop a robust budget for adaptive golf programming. It will be very important to identify a sustainable source of funding.

Sample budgets for programming can be found in the References section at the end of this handbook.

[Identifying Potential Adaptive Players/Promotion of Programming](#)

It is usually necessary to locate individuals interested in participating in adaptive programming. Recruitment and promotion of activities can take place simultaneously. Potential sources can include:

- Veterans' programs and hospitals
- Therapeutic recreation programs
- PGA of America sections
- Programs serving individuals with disabilities
- Charitable organizations raising funds for individuals with disabilities
- Other adaptive sports organizations

State and regional golf associations can also help promote and support adaptive golf opportunities.



Basic Instruction/Clinics

Those helping with instruction will need to learn how to teach adaptive players. For more information in this regard, please consult your local PGA of America section and the LPGA Teaching Division.

The benefits of introductory adaptive golf programming are best realized with frequent opportunities, e.g., monthly clinics.

For more information regarding adaptive instruction, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Adaptive Equipment

Some players require adaptive carts (“seated carts”) in order to play golf. Some players have their own seated carts (and trailers); others will need to borrow a seated cart. Seated carts are usually charged and stored between rounds in the cart barn. On arrival to the course, seated players typically take their wheelchairs into the cart barn to transfer into their seated cart; wheelchairs are then stored in the cart barn when players are on the course. Players typically leave their clubs on the seated carts between rounds.

Some equipment manufacturers may be able to provide adaptive equipment for players with certain impairments, e.g., if longer than standard clubs are needed.

For more information regarding adaptive equipment, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Introduction to Play

The best way to start playing golf is on an actual or improvised short course, a few holes at a time.

At this phase it is also good to introduce basic Etiquette and Rules of Golf.

Helping Other Adaptive Competitions

If USGA Allied Golf Associations (AGAs), also known as state and regional golf associations, and PGA of America Sections are interested in conducting adaptive competitions, one of the best ways to learn is by helping existing adaptive organizations with their events.

These organizations are often seeking assistance with referees, scoring, and many other volunteer roles.



USGA Regional Affairs Directors can help identify adaptive events and organizations seeking assistance.

Conducting Competitions

Duration

Competitions may be 18-54 holes. A practice round is typically offered the day prior to starting when registration can also take place.

In some cases, a 9-hole competition is appropriate, e.g., for juniors or new players. In this case, a practice round is not necessarily needed.

Facility

It is important to ensure that the host facility is ADA compliant, e.g., parking, clubhouse, etc.

For more information regarding ADA Frequently Asked Questions, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Course Style

The course should be carefully chosen with the following in mind:

- Generally flat terrain without soft, sandy areas
- Teeing areas are not overly elevated, especially the more forward tees
- Multiple tees with short yardage options (can place tees in the fairways)
- Most bunkers have at least one level access point
- Minimally elevated putting greens
- Receptive putting greens (that is, not brand new)
- Minimal forced carries, including penalty areas and bunkers in front of putting greens
- Cart paths do not have continuous curbing
- All playing areas of the course are accessible by cart
- Narrow foot paths are minimal and not required for convenient access
- The 9th green/10th tee are in general proximity to the clubhouse

Carts

Players in adaptive competitions almost always take carts. Some players are unable to drive and will need to have someone else drive for them.



Players

Amateurs and professionals usually compete together in adaptive golf; typically, there are not purses. Men and women also usually participate in the same competition, though typically with separate prizes.

Many events offer a senior division; a few offer a junior division. Otherwise, all ages compete together.

WR4GD Passes

Some events may require entrants to have a WR4GD Pass. This is a verification of eligibility based primarily on International Paralympic Committee (IPC) standards.

Most events do not require players to have WR4GD Passes. For more information regarding WR4GD Passes, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Virtus

Players with Intellectual Impairment seeking a WR4GD Pass will also need to apply for Virtus eligibility. This begins by contacting the Virtus affiliate in each country.

For more information, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Handicap Index®

Some events may require entrants to have a Handicap Index®. In this case, best practice is to collect GHIN numbers, and identify each player's Handicap Index as of the same date.

Upon conclusion of each competition, event organizers should let players know that they will post all scores or ask all players to do so themselves.

For more information regarding a Handicap Index, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Caddies

Some players will bring their own caddies, especially players with vision impairment and intellectual impairment. Some players may request professional or volunteer caddies. The Rules of Golf also allow aides and supervisors in some instances, but in practice these are seldom seen in addition to a caddie.

Format

While other options exist, individual stroke play is the preferred format most of the time.



The Rules of Golf

The Modified Rules are now part of the Rules of Golf (see Rule 25).

There are some Model Local Rules available for consideration which can be found in the Committee Procedures Section of the Official Guide to the Rules, Section 8M. Just like any other Local Rule that Committees would like to use, these must be adopted in order to be in effect.

Some items to consider when conducting adaptive competitions are:

- Marking the edge of penalty areas higher than usual to get to a level area that is at least four club-lengths wide
- Determining whether objects that would typically be treated as integral objects should be abnormal course conditions, such as sandy paths
- Establishing dropping zones in locations where seated players will be able to access them
- Establishing dropping zones on the putting green side of penalty areas
- Using maximum score to assist with pace of play
- Using MLR E-5 for lost ball or ball out of bounds to assist with pace of play
- Using MLR M-1 so that seated players may move the ball 6 inches
- Using MLR M-2 to deem small bunkers or bunkers without level access to be ground under repair for seated players only, if seated players will not be able to enter or exit the bunker with their seated cart
- Using MLR M-4 so that seated players may take limited relief for ball in bunker such as when steep slopes prohibit cart access

For more information regarding the Rules of Golf and Model Local Rules, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Suspension of Play

Suspension of play is often easier than usual for golf competitions, as most adaptive players take carts. The few players that don't take carts can be helped by other players with an empty seat, referees, course staff, etc. Therefore, vehicles like vans are not typically needed for evacuation purposes.

Event organizers should consider stopping play for heavy rain, even if it is not dangerous weather, as such conditions can be unsafe for adaptive players, especially seated players. If possible, this should be done with enough time for players to get to shelter before the heavy rain starts.

If the course is requiring carts to stay on paths, then play typically can not continue.



Tee Assignments

Two to three sets of tees are usually assigned for men; these can be assigned by impairment type or Handicap Index, although seated players always compete from the shortest men's tees. Seniors are also often assigned to the shortest men's tee. Due to smaller numbers, there is usually only one women's tee, which typically coincides with the shortest men's tees.

Typically, the longest tees available are not used. The longest men's tees are often between 5500-6300 yards, and the shortest men's tees are often between 4500-5200 yards, depending on what the course has available. Tee-markers can be placed in the fairway if needed to achieve the desired yardage.

Pace of Play

Adaptive golf usually takes a little longer, for example 5-6 hour rounds. Event organizers should plan accordingly. Things like 12-minute intervals between groups, and carts for each player, can help with pace of play. It can also help to vary the players in each group by impairment and Handicap Index. Incorporating some of the items mentioned in the Rules of Golf section above can also favorably impact pace of play.

Considerations for Visually-Impaired Players

It helps visually-impaired players if flagsticks and hole flags are white or yellow. If the event is using caddie bibs, it is also helpful if these are white or yellow.

Rankings

There are two rankings available for consideration in the USA. Events can participate in either, neither, or both. Both rankings include professional and amateur players.

World Ranking for Golfers with Disability (WR4GD) –

WR4GD is part of the World Amateur Golf Ranking® / WAGR®, which is administered by the USGA and The R&A, golf's governing bodies. In order to be part of WR4GD, players must have a WR4GD Pass and earn points in a WR4GD Counting Event. WR4GD Counting Events are scheduled for a minimum of 36 holes; all tees used must have a Course and Slope Rating.

WR4GD combines players with different impairments within one ranking which has some filtering capabilities. Players usually are not required to have a WR4GD Pass to participate in a WR4GD Counting Event.

U.S. Adaptive Golf Alliance Ranking (USAGR) –



This ranking is administered by the U.S. Adaptive Golf Alliance (USAGA), and is available to their member organizations. USAGR Counting Events are scheduled for a minimum of 18 holes; all tees used must have a Course and Slope Rating. Players self-assess their impairments for this ranking which is organized by USAGR impairment groups. Players usually are not required to have a WR4GD Pass to participate in a USAGR Counting Event.

For more information regarding rankings, see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

GHIN Numbers

The USGA may be able to assist event organizers who need to look up the Handicap Index of every player in the field as of a certain date, as long as GHIN numbers were collected as part of the entry process.

For more information regarding Handicap Indexes and GHIN, please see the Resources section at the end of this handbook.

Operations

It is helpful to consider aspects related to adaptive golf in all planning, for example:

- Wider scoring areas
- No roping & staking
- No rope lines at the driving range
- Turn off GPS cart location restrictions
- Box lunches at the turn, etc.

Social Functions

There is often a welcome reception the night before a competition starts, where Local Rules can be discussed. There is also typically an awards ceremony and reception.

Awards

Awards can be designated as the event organizer wishes, e.g., by impairment type or Handicap Index, gender, age, etc.



RESOURCES

(Resources are listed in no particular order; appearance here does not indicate USGA endorsement or verification of expertise, capability, or services. To request additions to this list, please contact Colton Dean, cdean@usga.org)

ADA FAQs

- [Frequently Asked Questions - Stein Consulting](#)

Terminology

- [2nd U.S. Adaptive Open – General Terminology](#)

Videos

- USGA Videos
 - [Superpowers](#)
 - [U.S. Adaptive Open Trophies](#)
 - [Golf Digest Series – An Even Playing Field](#)
 - [Additional U.S. Adaptive Open Videos](#)

Fundraising/Grants

- [National Alliance for Accessible Golf](#)

Sample Budgets

- Clinic (Appendix A)
- Competition (Appendix B)

How to Instruct Adaptive Players

- [PGA of America Sections](#)
- [LPGA Teaching Professionals](#)
- Other Organizations
 - [Adaptive Golf Academy](#)
 - [EDGA – Coach Education](#)
 - [EDGA – Key Coaching Considerations](#)
 - [PGA HOPE](#)



Sample Clinic Agenda

- Appendix C

Terms of Entry

- [2nd U.S. Adaptive Open – Terms of Entry](#)

Adaptive Golf Organizations/Tournaments/Clinics

- [USAGA](#)
- [EAGA](#)
- [USGA Allied Golf Associations](#)
- Others not included in USAGA/EAGA
 - [American Blind Golf](#)
 - Special Olympics North America (questions: cpippert@specialolympics.org)

[USGA Regional Affairs Team](#)

How to Get a [WR4GD Pass](#)

How to Get Virtus Eligibility

- In the USA, start with [Athletes Without Limits](#)
- In Canada, start with [CAAIDS](#)
- For other countries, please go to the [Virtus Members](#) page

Handicap Index® / GHIN

- [How to Get a Handicap Index](#)
- USGA Handicap Department (questions: hdcquestions@usga.org)

The Rules of Golf

- [The Rules of Golf \(see Rule 25\)](#)
- [Clarifications](#)
- [Model Local Rules](#)



Rankings

- [WR4GD](#) (questions: WR4GD@usga.org)
- [USAGR](#) (questions: jsnyder@usaga.org)

Seated Cart Manufacturers

- [SoloRider](#)
- [Cheetah Golf](#)
- [ParaMotion](#)
- [EZ Go](#)
- [Potential sources for borrowing seated carts:](#)
 - Parks and Rec organizations
 - Military bases with golf facilities
 - Veterans Administration (VA) organizations
 - Golf resorts
 - State/regional golf associations
 - PGA Sections

Adaptive Equipment/Golf Equipment Manufacturers

- USGA Equipment Standards (conforming equipment questions: testcenter@usga.org)
- [Callaway Golf](#)
- [PING](#)
- [Nike](#)
- [USAGA](#)

Adaptive Golf Attire

- [Mr. MA Golf](#)

Therapeutic Organizations/Recreational Therapy

- Parks and Rec organizations
- Military bases with golf facilities
- Veterans Administration (VA) organizations
- Therapeutic clinics



Appendix A

Sample Clinic Budget

Assuming 10 participants per clinic.

PGA Professionals (2): \$300

- Typically, \$150 per 1.5 – 2-hour clinic.
- Rates are subject to change and site specific.

Access to Facility: \$150

- Includes driving range, practice area, and dedicated area of clubhouse.

F&B: \$150

- Including lunch is encouraged for participants and standard for volunteers.

Estimated total per clinic - \$600



Appendix B

Sample Competition Budget

Assuming 30 player field and 36-hole stroke play competition.

Expenses:

- Access to Facility/Golf Course: \$1800 - \$4500
- Player Hospitality/F&B: \$600 - \$1800
- Staff/Volunteers: \$250 - \$750
- Trophies/Awards: \$100 - \$450

Estimated total low-end expenses per competition - \$2750

Estimated total high-end expenses per competition - \$7500

Income:

- Entry fees typically range from \$100 - \$175 per player and include one practice round and two competitive rounds.
- Total entry fee income: \$3000 - \$5250



Appendix C

Sample Clinic Agenda

Assuming 10 participants per clinic.

Where to Begin:

- Proposing a program and benefits of hosting to the potential host club/facility
- Identify Outreach Leader for volunteers and participants.
- At least 2 knowledgeable and trained coaches (PGA, LPGA)
- 3-5 knowledgeable and trained volunteers
 - Depending on disability some will need 1:1 assistance at clinics, but not all.
- Physical therapist (optional)
- Identifying accessible facilities
 - Parking
 - Clubhouse
 - Restrooms
 - Driving Range

Overview:

- Online Registration System
 - Including, but not limited to, Name, Contact Information, Release of Liability, Emergency Contact Information, Information on Disability, Information of Allergies, Caregiver Contact Information, and any Specific Accommodations that may be necessary.
- Set-up
 - Staff and key volunteers arrive prior to clinic for station set-up and briefing.
- Checking-In
 - Name tags are recommended, but not required.
- Introductions
 - Including, but not limited to, overview of the day's program, safety briefing, and important areas of the facility.
- Warm-Ups
 - Including, but not limited to, general stretches and golf specific stretches.
- Stations
 - Driving Range
 - Chipping
 - Putting
 - Physical Therapist (optional)
- Take down
 - Staff and key volunteers take down of clinic stations.
- Lunch (optional)
- Closing
 - Opportunities for involvement and future clinic schedules