

## Position Paper on Par

*For the implementation of the new World Handicap System within the U.S.*

Standardizing par is a procedure that is currently used in some countries around the world under the World Handicap System (WHS) and has been identified as the recommended practice by the USGA, and its default position for adjudicating par. The benefits in standardizing par at courses include simplification, avoiding confusion due to par not matching the scorecard at the course, and enhancing the golfer experience.

The primary factor for determining whether a standardized par should be used is the **design of the hole as it was intended to be played**. Secondary factors include the **most commonly played set of tees per gender** and the **most common par value on a hole**.

In instances where the yardage for one or more tees falls outside of the established par guidelines, the Allied Golf Association (AGA) should determine whether the yardage difference, any effective playing length factors, and/or the setup of the hole from that tee(s) has caused a change in the way the hole is meant to be played. This distinction must be made by the AGA after consultation with the golf club and/or golf course staff.

Below is a listing of additional benefits of standardizing par:

1. A standardized par (for a specific gender) eliminates the need for an additional adjustment for players (within a gender) competing from different sets of tees with differing pars.
2. Standardization of par almost always matches scorecard/tee sign values, where par is routinely displayed as one par per gender per course/hole. This will minimize any mistakes for when applying net double bogey and net par where conflicts might otherwise exist.
3. This procedure is more commonly supported by golf club and/or golf course staff who wish to have par denoted as the hole was designed to be played.
4. Research indicates using a standardized par will have minimal impact on a Handicap Index. In addition, this will not have a meaningful impact on equity, as par is subtracted out during the Course Handicap calculation and any strokes exchanged will be the same.

The following are examples where it would be practical to establish a standardized par on a hole:

1. The hole lengths from all sets of tees on a specific hole lie within the recommended par-4 range for men, except for the forward tee with a length of 235 yards. This hole plays uphill, increasing the effective length of the hole; i.e. it is a 2-shot hole for most players, especially those who are likely

- to play from this forward tee. Each set of tees on this hole should be adjudicated as a par-4 due to the way the hole was designed to be played.
2. A double dogleg hole has three sets of tees for the men: 497 yards, 458 yards, and 409 yards. Hole lengths fall into both par-5 and par-4 ranges following the guidelines as set forth within the Rules of Handicapping. However, the hole was designed to play as a double dogleg from all sets of tees, and therefore should be adjudicated as a par-5 accordingly.
  3. The hole lengths from all sets of tees on a specific hole lie within the recommended par-5 range for women, except for the forward tee with a length of 355 yards. Most players, especially those who are likely to play from the forward tee, play it as a 3-shot hole. Each set of tees on this hole should be adjudicated as a par-5 due to the way the hole was designed to be played.

The following are examples where it would be impractical to establish a standardized par on a hole:

1. The hole length from the back tee for women is 520 yards, which is well within the par-5 range based on the guidelines within the Rules of Handicapping. It was designed to be played as a 3-shot hole. All other tees on the hole are considerably shorter and were designed to be played as a 2-shot hole. In this case, it would be recommended to adjudicate the back tee as a par-5 and all others as a par-4.
2. The forward tee on a hole was designed to play to an alternate green, with the yardage of 140 yards for men well within the par-3 guidelines. The golf club determined to make this alternate green available because the approach shot to the original green is significantly uphill and requires crossing a large penalty area. In this case, it would be recommended to adjudicate the forward tee as a par-3 and all other tees as a par-4.
3. A tee is placed in the fairway for juniors, which is significantly shorter than the other sets of tees on the hole. The way the hole was designed to be played was not considered in the placement of this junior tee. It is recommended that par be considered independently for this tee. Moreover, if junior tees are placed throughout the course, then they should be kept on a separate scorecard.

In closing, it is ultimately the responsibility of the AGA with jurisdiction to adjudicate par based on the factors mentioned above. When necessary, the USGA is available to support the AGA in this process.

To locate and contact the AGA in your area, please [click here](#).