

# 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 will automatically calculate an 18-hole Score Differential™ for the round, based on the player's 9-hole Score Differential and expected Score Differential based on their current Handicap Index®, allowing the 9-hole round to be considered in the player's Handicap Index calculation right away.

$$\text{Score Differential from 9 holes played} + \text{Expected 9-hole Score Differential} = \text{18-hole Score Differential}$$

This method allows the Handicap Index of all players, whether they played a 9- or 18-hole round, to be updated the day after a score is posted.

## What is an "Expected Score"?

An expected score is the score a player is expected to achieve over a specified number of holes on a course of standard difficulty. It is based on the average Score Differential of players with a given Handicap Index and a normal distribution of scores.

By using expected score to convert a 9-hole score into an 18-hole Score Differential, good 9-hole rounds (relative to the player's ability) will result in good 18-hole Score Differentials, average 9-hole rounds will result in average 18-hole Score Differentials, and so on.

## Can I see an example?

A player with a Handicap Index of 14.0 posts a 9-hole score of 41. Based on the Course Rating™ and Slope Rating® of the tees played, this results in a 9-hole Score Differential of 7.2. That value is then added to the player's expected 9-hole Score Differential to determine an 18-hole Score Differential of 15.7, which will be entered into the player's scoring record immediately.

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
Yardage	393	133	378	378	378	378	155	416	357	3030
Par	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	35
Stroke Index	5*	17	17	17	17	17	15*	3*	13	
Player A	4	4				5	4	5	3	41

$$+ \text{Expected 9-hole Score Differential (for 14.0 Handicap Index player)} = \text{18-hole Score Differential 15.7}$$

## What are the benefits?

- This benefits the many players who regularly play and post 9-hole rounds because it is more responsive. Players do not have to wait for another 9-hole score to be posted for an 18-hole Score Differential to be calculated.
- This provides a better indicator of how a player will normally perform over 18 holes on a given day when compared to combining 9-hole scores from different days and under different playing conditions.
- This method produces a more consistent and comparable Handicap Index for those who post 9-hole scores.
  - » Prior to 2024, the order in which the 9-hole scores were combined could add volatility to the Handicap Index.
  - » It was also common for two good 9-hole scores to combine and produce an 18-hole Score Differential which was lower than any of the Score Differentials based on an 18-hole score in the player's scoring record - which resulted in a Handicap Index that may be difficult for the player to play to.