

# AUSTRALIAN MEN'S HANDICAPPING SYSTEM (Copyright)

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Revised 11 May 2006 (incorporating terminology changes, the deletion of the former section 6 (Handicap Match Play), and material changes denoted by **bold, underline & italics**).

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## 1. Introduction

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This Golf Australia system, based on Men's Course Rating, has been designed to achieve uniformity in handicapping throughout Australia for male amateur golfers. The national system of handicapping must meet two main requirements:

- simple enough for operation by small and large clubs alike.
- thorough enough to produce fair and uniform handicapping throughout the country.

The System is based on the assumption that every player will endeavour to make the best score he can at each hole in every round he plays and that he will report every eligible round for handicapping purposes, regardless of where the round was played. Golf Australia delegates to each of its male Member States the power to administer on its behalf the handicapping of all players who are members of clubs affiliated with such States. Any disputes shall be referred to Golf Australia whose decision shall be final.

**Note: Any handicap administered by an affiliated Australian golf club, by itself or Golf Link, and calculated in accordance with a Golf Australia system, is owned by Golf Australia.**

Essential points of the System are that:

- all handicaps shall be calculated in accordance with the System as outlined below and in terms of the Men's Calculated Course Rating (MCCR) as described in the Australian Men's Course Rating System.
- all handicaps referred to in this System are stroke handicaps.
- all handicaps allotted under this System shall be either:
  - Australian Men's Handicaps, valid at all affiliated clubs or
  - Club Handicaps, generally valid only at the issuing club (Home Club).
- regular and accurate records of all eligible course performances be kept.
- there be uniform determination of the course rating of golf courses in Australia.
- the Australian Men's Handicapping System be properly applied.

### a. Scores for Handicap Purposes

- (i) All scores established in all 18 holes singles stroke (includes Par and Stableford) competition rounds played under the Rules of Golf at courses with an Australian Men's Course Rating shall be used for handicapping purposes. A competition round is defined as one conducted by a recognised golf club, its professional or agent, or other bona-fide body, for which trophies or prizes are awarded for golfing performance.

A "bona-fide body" is a formally constituted club, association or group formed primarily for the purpose of conducting ongoing golf events, played in accordance with the Rules of Golf and appropriate local rules, or otherwise to administer golf for a defined area or group of golfers. However scores returned from corporate/trade days or the like, not otherwise eligible as above but played in accordance with the Rules of Golf, may be used for handicap reductions only.

*Exception:* A score returned for a non-competition round, attested by a golfer affiliated directly or indirectly with a State Association of Golf Australia, may be used for the purpose of obtaining an initial Australian Men's Handicap (see Section 2) or to enable sufficient cards to maintain an Australian Men's Handicap (see Section 4). If no MCCR is available, the course AMCR shall be used in place of a MCCR.

- (ii) When a competition limits the number of clubs that may be used to fewer than 14, a score that reduces a handicap shall be used, but not one that increases it.
- (iii) When a player is disqualified, his actual score may be used for handicapping purposes, at the discretion of the handicapping committee. Scores should be used when actual scores are known, but a Rules breach has caused disqualification eg. card not signed or handicap not recorded.
- (iv) Four-ball scores (including mixed events) may be used for handicapping but only for the reduction of a player's handicap. Cards with fewer than 42 Stableford points or worse than 6 up against par or 6 under in stroke events may be disregarded, and the player's score must appear at least 9 times on the card. (GOLF Link clubs will enter these scores as ad-hoc scores, using the AMCR as the MCCR)

When a player has no handicap stroke on a hole and his score is not recorded, he should be given 1 stroke over the par of the hole. On holes where a player receives a handicap stroke but his score is not recorded, he should be given 1.5 strokes over the par of the hole. When a player receives 2 handicap strokes on a hole and his score is not recorded, he should be given 2.5 strokes over the par for the hole.

When all the gaps in the card have been filled in, the scores should be added, and where a half appears in the total, the scores should be taken to the next higher whole number. Except in the most unusual circumstances, the score obtained in this manner will be higher than the score actually recorded by the player and in this way does not unduly penalise the player. The score obtained should be recorded in the player's handicap record sheet and treated in the same way as all other scores for handicap purposes.

- (v) Any stipulated round of 9 holes or more may be used for handicapping purposes. The score shall be converted to an 18-hole score by the following method:-
- i) When the score is **worse than nett par** for a stipulated round of less than 18 holes, the score is extended to 18 holes on a pro-rata basis, e.g.  
Stableford round over 12 holes – score of 20 points is extended to 30 points.  
Par competition over 9 holes – score of -3 is extended to -6.  
Stroke competition over 9 holes – score of 4 over par is extended to 8 over par.
  - ii) When the score is **equal to or better than nett par** for a round less than 18 holes, the score is extended to 18 holes by completing the card with nett par figures, e.g.

Stableford round over 12 holes – score of 26 points is extended to 38 points (26 plus 12).

Par competition over 9 holes – score of + 3 is extended to +3 (+3 plus Square).

Stroke competition over 9 holes – score of nett 33 (par 36) is extended by adding the par of other 9 (say 35) = nett 68.

The extended scores are then utilised as in a normal 18-hole competition.

- (vi) When a person plays within a competition field, but does not actually enter the competition, his score, if attested by an affiliated golfer, should be used for handicapping purposes.
- (vii) When a player, without reasonable justification, fails to complete a round or fails to return a score for handicapping, his Home Club shall adjust his handicap records, in accordance with this System, such adjustment being based on his actual, estimated or potential score. (GOLF *Link* clubs must indicate whether a non-return is “approved” (e.g. round not completed due to illness, bad weather or emergency – no adjustment to handicap.) or “unapproved” (e.g. round not completed or card not returned due to a poor score – handicap is extended by .2 for category A and .1 for other categories.)

**b. The Player**

- (i) A player shall have one Australian Men’s Handicap only and this shall be allotted by his Home Club.
- (ii) If a player is, or becomes, a member of more than one club, he shall select one club as his Home Club (for handicapping purposes only) and shall report to this club his decision and the names of his other club or clubs. He shall also report to his other clubs the name of his Home Club, his handicap there, and any alterations that may be made to his handicap from time to time. If a player ceases to be a member of another club, he shall report the fact to his Home Club so that it at all times has a record of all clubs of which he is a member.
- (iii) A player shall report in writing or by returning the card to his Home Club all competition round scores returned by him at other clubs whether or not these are at clubs of which he is also a member. (This is not necessary if the visited and Home clubs are both on GOLF *Link*.) With such reported scores he shall also give the MCCR of the day and the par of that course.
- (iv) It is desirable that the player, when playing at a visited club, carries his GOLF *Link* card, or an introductory card that lists his current exact Australian Men’s Handicap.

**c. The Home Club**

The Handicap Committee of the Home Club shall:

- (i) maintain a satisfactory method of recording players' scores and handicaps;
- (ii) ensure that players' scores are regularly and faithfully recorded and adjustments made as soon as possible to handicaps as required by this system;
- (iii) maintain a record of the MCCRs;
- (iv) apply this system in terms of its letter and spirit;
- (v) as far as possible, insist that all cards are returned by competitors;
- (vi) when a score returned from a Visited Club does not contain the MCCR, use the AMCR for calculations if reasonable investigations fail;
- (vii) when a player, without reasonable justification, fails to complete a round or fails to return a score for handicapping, adjust his handicap records, in accordance with this System, such adjustment being based on his actual, estimated or potential score.

The Club Committee may determine which categories of its members are eligible to hold Australian and/or Club handicaps. Such handicaps shall only be available to golfers in respect of whom an annual fee is payable to the State governing body.

**d. The Visited Club**

Whilst it is the responsibility of the individual player to ensure that all scores returned in competitions at other clubs are returned to the player's Home Club, in addition, visited clubs shall return all competition scores to the visitors' Home Clubs with MCCRs provided (unless they are both on GOLF *Link*).

When a player plays a substantial amount of golf (36 holes or more) over a relatively short period of time at a club (for this purpose called the Visited Club) which is not his Home Club and in circumstances such that his Home Club does not have time to keep his record and handicap up to date with his scores, the Visited Club may use his scores to alter his handicap temporarily, in accordance with this System, using the player's playing handicap as the base for calculations if his exact handicap is not readily available.

## 2. Allotment of Australian Men’s Handicap

To obtain an Australian Men’s Handicap, a player shall submit five cards which shall be adjusted by the Handicap Committee as below, treating any score of more than 2 over par at any holes as 2 over par. At least 3 of the initial 5 cards must be from Home Club competitions. Each card must indicate the MCCR and AMCR.

Par	Returned Card	Amended Score
4	6	6
4	5	5
3	5	5
5	5	5
3	6	5
3	7	5
4	5	5
4	4	4
5	8	7
<b>35</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>47</b>

Scores should be adjusted by the handicapper thus.

**Note:** This adjustment is only made to the initial five cards.

After these adjustments have been made, the difference between the amended score and the MCCR of each card is ascertained. These five differentials are added together and then averaged by dividing by five. The resulting average (to one decimal place) is the player's exact handicap, which can then be rounded to the nearer whole number (.5 being rounded up) to give the playing

Australian Men's Handicap. As the exact handicap is the starting point for future handicapping, both figures must always be recorded.

The Handicap Committee may allot a player an initial handicap less than the average if it has good reason to consider that a lower handicap is more appropriate to the player's ability. Any previous handicap or performance should be taken into account – see Section 4 (Life of Cards).

The maximum Australian Men's Handicap is 27. If an exact handicap reaches 27.5, the player's Australian Men's Handicap remains at 27 and a Club Handicap of 28 applies if permitted by the club. (See Section 8). If the club does not permit Club Handicaps over 27, then the player's exact handicap remains on 27.4 until a differential of 26 or less is returned. (Clubs on Golf Link need to advise of the handicap limit they wish to have applied.)

### 3. Alterations of Handicaps

Handicaps are divided into five categories. These are:

Categories	Handicaps
A	up to 4
B	5 - 12
C	13 - 19
D	20 - 27
E	over 27 (Club Handicaps)

The recording of scores shall be kept by **differentials**; that is the amount by which the player's **gross score was above or below the MCCR**. If a player's differential equals his handicap or is within the "buffer zone" stipulated for each handicap category (see table below), no change is made to his exact handicap.

If the player submits a score with a differential that is greater than his handicap plus the appropriate buffer, his exact handicap shall be increased by 0.1, irrespective of the extent to which his differential was beyond the buffer zone.

For example, a player on a handicap of 17 who records a differential of 17, 18 or 19 will not have his exact handicap adjusted. A player on a handicap of 3 who records a differential of 4, or more will have .1 added to his exact handicap as Category A has no buffer zone.

If a player submits a score with the differential less than his handicap, his exact handicap is reduced by an amount per stroke that his differential was below his handicap, the amount per stroke being determined by his handicap category (see table below). The buffer zone does not apply to differentials less than the handicap.

Category	Handicap	Buffer Zone	Add .1 if differential is above handicap by at least -	If differential is below handicap, subtract for each stroke under
A	up to 4	0	1	.1
B	5-12	1	2	.2
C	13-19	2	3	.3
D	20-27	3	4	.4
E	over 27	3	4	.5

**Additionally, in handicap category A (up to 4.4), if a player submits a score with a differential more than 5 strokes higher than his handicap, his exact handicap shall be increased by 0.2, instead of the 0.1 as listed in the above table. A non-returned card (unapproved) in category A shall also attract a 0.2 increase.**

A player on 12.2 returns a score with a differential of 14; his exact handicap becomes 12.3. If he then returns a score with a differential of 5, his exact handicap is reduced by  $7 \times .2 = 1.4$  i.e. to an exact handicap of 10.9 and his playing handicap is 11 which is immediately his new handicap.

When a player's handicap is to be reduced so that it goes from a higher category to a lower category, it is reduced at the rate appropriate to the higher category only so far as brings his playing handicap into the lower category – the balance of the reduction should be at the rate appropriate to the lower category.

**For example:** A player on 20.2 returns a score with a differential of 14, i.e. 6 strokes below his playing handicap of 20; his reduction is as follows:

$$20.2 - (2 \times .4) \text{ (i.e. } - 8) = 19.4$$

$$19.4 - (4 \times .3) \text{ (i.e. } - 1.2) = 18.2$$

A player whose exact handicap contains .5 or over shall be given the next higher handicap, e.g. 12.5 exact would be 13 playing handicap. This applies both if handicaps are to be increased or reduced.

Reductions shall be made forthwith on the day the score becomes known to the Home Club. (See also Section 1.d.).

It is recommended that increases be made forthwith, but may be left to be made at longer intervals. These intervals should not extend beyond the last day of the calendar month, and within that limitation may be regulated by State Associations.

**Note:** In a situation where a player competes in a competition round before a previous handicap-altering score is processed, his correct Australian Men's Handicap will be that displayed by either GOLF Link or (for clubs not operating within the GOLF Link system) such other display item as designated by his Home Club (even if he is aware of what his new handicap will be). NB The provisions of Section 1(d) govern in the event of a conflict between it and this note.

At all times, differentials and adjustments shall be applied to the recorded exact handicap rather than to any different handicap from which the player may have actually played.

### 4. Life of Cards

All handicap records will be examined at the beginning of a year with effect from 1 January, at which time all scores more than a year old will be disregarded, being no longer valid. For a player to retain an Australian Men's Handicap he must have at least 5 "live scores" at 1 January each year. (A member registered on GOLF Link with an Australian Men's Handicap by his club will be deemed to have submitted 5 scores as at the date of the initial data entry.) NB If a player plays in a competition round but fails to return a score for handicapping (either for an approved or unapproved reason), this round will not count as a "live score".

A player's Australian Men's Handicap will lapse until the number of live cards since 1 January of the previous year reaches five, with normal recording procedures operating from the player's last recorded exact handicap.

If a player returns to playing, having not submitted a score for two years or more, the Handicapping Committee may allot a new Australian Men's Handicap under the procedure as described in Section 2, or reinstate his previous handicap initially as a Club Handicap.

When a player changes from one Home Club to another, a copy of his handicap record shall be given to the new Home Club so that his exact Handicap (Australian or Club) can be taken over by the new Home Club. The handicap cannot be used if a player has no current membership of an affiliated body.

## 5. Par or Stableford Competitions

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The number of strokes awarded in either of these competitions is the player's full Australian Men's Handicap.

The amount by which the par of the course differs from the MCCR shall be added to or deducted from the player's score to obtain the correct score against the rating.

For example, a player who is 4 up on par 68 when the MCCR is 65 is only 1 up on the rating of 65. If the MCCR exceeds the par, the difference shall be added to the player's score.

Scores returned in a Bisque competition can be used for handicapping but only after conversion to a regular stroke, par or Stableford format.

## 6. Plus Handicaps

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A player shall not be retained on Plus 1 or better without the approval of his State Golf Association or Golf Australia. The State Golf Association is empowered to approve Australian Men's Handicaps of Plus 1 and refer Plus 2 or better handicap applications to Golf Australia, without referral from the player's Home Club. This shall occur on the first day of April and the first day of October.

Before allocating a Plus handicap, a State Association or Golf Australia will satisfy itself that the player was capable of playing to that plus handicap (against the MCCR) at least five times in the six-monthly review period in stroke rounds at no less than three different courses other than at his Home Club.

A Plus 1 handicap should not be considered unless the player's current exact handicap is + 1.0 or better, (for Plus 2, exact handicap of + 2.0 is required, etc) and that mark has been consistently maintained for several months. A check should be made that all relevant scores have been returned and that the club's calculations are correct. Where a player is able to play on a handicap of Plus 1 or better but does not fulfil the conditions of an Australian Men's Plus Handicap, the player's Home Club (and other clubs of which he is also a member) may allot a Club Handicap of Plus 1 or better in line with his exact handicap. (Note the last sentence of Section 3 above).

## 7. Australian Championships

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It is a condition of entry of Australian Championships that entries will only be accepted from amateur golfers ***who supply their GOLF Link number or*** who include a copy of their handicap record officially endorsed by their Home Club.

## 8. Club Handicaps

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A player who is not qualified to hold an Australian Men's Handicap may be allotted a Club Handicap for use at his Home Club. In addition, if a player has an exact handicap higher than 27.4 he may qualify for an Australian Men's Handicap of 27 and may also be allotted a Club Handicap based on the exact handicap.

The method of assessing Club Handicaps must strictly adhere to the Australian Men's Handicapping System, and can only be allotted by the player's Home Club. Clubs may impose their own Club Handicap limit over 27.

When playing away from their Home Club or in open events, players must play on their Australian Men's Handicaps, unless it is a specific condition of the competition that away Club Handicaps are eligible.

## 9. Generally

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Handicaps are intended to enable players to compete in handicap events on even terms. When a player is showing better form than his handicap or is showing an increased interest in playing better golf but is not returning cards which lead to an automatic reduction in handicap and his improvement, current ability, or some other justifiable circumstances make it apparent to his Home Club that the player is over-handicapped, his handicap may be reduced. This should not be a penalty for lack of scores but solely to provide uniformity in handicapping among all who play handicap golf.

A player's handicap may also be increased for players who may be recovering from injuries, illness or other justifiable reason. Such alterations may be effected at any time because the circumstances which give rise to this unusual step may be such as to require fairly prompt action in fairness to all concerned. When a player's returns give rise to suspicion that he may be attempting to "manipulate a handicap", or is in serious breach of this System or the Rules of Golf, the Home Club shall be empowered to investigate his performances and, if considered warranted, temporarily suspend his Australian and/or Club Handicap.

**Note:** A decision to increase, decrease or suspend a player's handicap under this Section must be ratified by the General Committee of the player's Home Club.

Should the State Association or Golf Australia, on inquiry, be satisfied that a player's Australian Men's Handicap has not been determined in accordance with the Australian Men's Handicapping System or the player has acted in serious breach of this System or the Rules of Golf or otherwise detrimentally to the best interests of the game, it may withdraw that player's Australian Men's Handicap.

**Implementation Guidelines:** The following guidelines are to assist clubs in implementing Section 9. If these conditions are adhered to, the State Association will support clubs when action is necessary to provide uniformity in handicapping among all who play handicap golf:

1. The General Committee (Board of Directors) should accumulate as much data, cards, scores, competition results, as possible that would indicate handicap adjustments are necessary.
2. The General Committee (Board of Directors) should as a body, make a decision to increase or decrease a member's handicap as indicated by Section 9 of the Australian Men's Handicapping System.
3. No one person or group of persons, other than the General Committee (Board of Directors) has the power to increase or decrease a member's handicap when implementing Section 9.
4. At no time can the General Committee (Board of Directors) ever "freeze" a member's handicap that is being calculated in accordance with the Australian Men's Handicapping System, at a particular figure.
5. Appropriate letters for use by clubs are available from State Associations wishing to implement Section 9. The first letter advises the member that his handicap is to be reviewed due to his good, or otherwise, performances. The second letter advises of the newly approved handicap.

## **10. Handicap Information Disclosure**

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No affiliated club, association or other affiliated or non-affiliated body may make handicaps or records of handicaps calculated under this System available outside the environs of its course, clubhouse or office. This prohibits the unauthorised display of handicap information on the Internet and other forms of public media. For the purpose of viewing members' handicap information outside the club environs, the club, association or other body may, **with the express written consent of Golf Australia**, link its Internet site to the approved Golf Australia GOLF *Link* Internet site, and/or other GOLF *Link* media facilities as advised from time to time.