



Winter Golf Checklist & Reference Guide – For World Handicap System™ Purposes

Version 4.0 – Updated 13th October 2023

Players should be encouraged to return scores for handicapping throughout the year, as WHS™ does not have an off season in GB&I. This document is to assist clubs to prepare for winter golf, to ensure relevant scores for handicap purposes can continue to be submitted. Your County will be pleased to offer further advice, if required.

Tee Set & Yardage Compliance

The Rules of Handicapping require that for a score to be acceptable for handicap purposes, it must have been played over a measured and officially rated tee set. The set of tees must be registered on the WHS™ platform by England Golf. Every golfer should be made aware of the available course/tees for the day on arrival at the first tee; and whoever controls the first tee (Professional etc) should be fully informed.

Appendix G of the WHS™ Rules of Handicapping clarifies that the front of the teeing area **should not** be placed more than +/- 10 yards from the fixed measurement point on each tee. Overall length of the course **MUST NOT** be +/- 100 yards from its measured length (from the fixed marker).

A 300 yards Rule provides for situations where there is a necessary shortening or lengthening of one or more holes by a total of more than 100 yards, but less than 300 yards: **BUT this would only be acceptable on a 'temporary' basis e.g., course excavation work / drainage etc.** This 'Temporary Rating' **must be submitted to, and approved by, England Golf.** This will permit 'acceptable scores' to continue to be returned. The maximum duration of approval is one year. For such ratings, please use form CR003 obtainable from



the England Golf website and submit the completed form together with the required documents to course.rating@englandgolf.org

Clubs and green staff teams are to be made aware of these requirements when setting up a course or tee set.

Default Markers

Within the WHS™ portal, clubs have the opportunity to switch on and off available tee sets. This functionality will stop scores being submitted from general play (when using the MyEG app). The image below illustrates the tick boxes involved (ensure all boxes are unticked). Any changes need to be saved.

Note: depending on the local Club software being used, additional settings may need to be configured within that software to prevent General Play or Competition scores being submitted from tee sets that are not available.

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Winter Handicaps

As WHS™ allows for the submission of scores from measured and rated tee sets throughout the year, **any reference to a 'Winter Handicap' is no longer acceptable** (note: a player may only have one handicap). Clubs, or other Competition Organisers, may not run their own handicapping system.

Annual Review

The annual WHS™ handicap index review process is to be completed between 1st October and the end of December each year.

Specific criteria when completing a handicap review is detailed on pages 98 & 99 of the WHS™ Rules of Handicapping (Appendix D).

An Annual Review report with recommendations is available via the WHS™ portal, to ensure any review process is carried out in a consistent manner for all participants. Committees should also consider any player with a long-term illness or injury. Where results from non-acceptable score formats regularly demonstrate an ability which is better than a player's HI, such evidence may also be used for a reduction. It is recommended that a review of every player is NOT carried out. Full guidance notes are available on the EG website.

The Committee must inform the player of any adjustment in writing, offering the opportunity to appeal in line with the EG Appeals Process. Clubs are advised to record any changes within the 'notes' tab of each member record for players who have been impacted by any handicap review.

Preferred Lies & Cleaning the Ball

Preferred Lies (Model Local Rule E-3)

Ensure that all members and visitors are aware of any Local Rule for the authorised preferred lies period, which runs from the 1st of October through to 30th April each year. Any extension of preferred lies past the 30th of April, must be approved by the relevant County, who would consider applications on a case by-case basis and not as a blanket approach. For scores to be acceptable for



handicapping, the Local Rule may only allow the lie to be preferred on grass cut to fairway height or less within 6" of the reference point. See the Model Local Rule E3 [+here](#) for further guidance and sample wording of the Rule.

Cleaning the Ball (Model Local Rule E-2)

The Local Rule for marking, lifting, cleaning, and replacing on the same spot may be used anywhere within the General Area. It is recommended that this is limited to specific areas where extreme conditions make the playing of the game difficult using relief available under the usual Rules of Golf. Scores will still be acceptable for handicapping purposes. See Model Local Rule E2 [+here](#) for further guidance and sample wording of the Rule.

Mats (tees and fairway mats)

Acceptable Scores may be returned in Competitions and in General Play when there is a Local Rule in place requiring the compulsory use of fairway mats to protect the natural surfaces of the course, during the preferred lies period.

Suggested wording for local rule - 'When a player's ball lies in a part of the general area cut to fairway height or less and a putter is not being used for the stroke, the ball must be lifted, placed on and played from an Astroturf, or similar type, of mat. The mat must be placed as near as possible to where the ball originally lay, and the ball must be placed on the mat. The ball may be cleaned when lifted. If the ball on the mat is accidentally moved before a stroke is made, there is no penalty, and the ball must be placed again on the mat. If a tee is used to secure the mat into the ground, the ball must not be placed on the tee. Fairway mats on tees are not allowed, although an artificial teeing area/mat is acceptable. Mats may not be used in the rough.'

Bunkers

Scores are still acceptable for handicap purposes when bunkers are taken out of play, having been individually marked as Ground Under Repair, with relief taken under Rule 16.1. This would apply for situations such as severe or prolonged wet weather, or during maintenance work. In situations where there are multiple bunkers that need to be designated GUR, it is acceptable to define them along the



lines of 'all greenside bunkers on Hole 4' (or 'all bunkers on Hole 4')', via a notice to players and without having to place GUR signs in all bunkers.

There is no limit on the number of bunkers that can be taken 'out of play' for scores to count for handicapping.

Temporary Greens

For scores to be acceptable, no more than 2 temporary greens are allowed to be used. For a 9-hole course, only one temporary green will be allowed. Whilst temporary or alternative greens are acceptable for handicapping purposes, whenever the length of the course length has been increased or decreased by more than 100 yards for an 18-hole round or 50 yards for a 9-hole round, the adjustments to the Course Rating and Slope Rating set out in Appendix G of the Rules of Handicapping must be applied; with prior authority from the County.

Closed Holes

During winter months, there are various situations such as course conditions and maintenance plans where holes may be closed and declared out of play. In these circumstances the committee may decide to declare some holes out of play and could also still meet the requirement for up to 2 temporary greens.

These scores continue to be acceptable for handicap purposes - the golfer would follow rule 3.2 of the WHS™ Rules of Handicapping, 'When a Hole is Not Played', with the software calculating and awarding an adjusted gross score accordingly. Players may not play the closed hole.

Plastic Hole-Stabilising Rings

These plastic rings are placed above the top of the hole liner, normally covering the top inch of soil – see image below. Stabilising rings do not comply with the Rules of Golf and having discussed this with the R&A, the use of these rings **would not** merit an exception. Any scores returned for handicap purposes when the stabilising rings are in place would **NOT** be acceptable for handicap purposes.

Large 'Bucket holes' will not be acceptable for the same reasons.

