

LIBERTY CORNER, N.J., and ST. ANDREWS, Scotland (Nov. 4, 2019) – The World Handicap System (WHS) is ready to be launched in January 2020 and will provide golfers with a unified and more inclusive handicapping system for the first time.

Though many countries are planning to adopt the new system in January, the system will go live in other parts of the world throughout the year to accommodate different implementation plans and variations in the golf calendar.

Developed by the USGA and The R&A in close coordination with existing handicapping authorities, the WHS will provide all golfers with a consistent measure of playing ability, with handicaps calculated in the same way wherever they are in the world.

A key objective of the initiative was to develop a modern system, enabling as many golfers as possible to obtain and maintain a Handicap Index. Golfers will be able to transport their Handicap Index globally and compete or play a casual round with players from other regions on a fair basis. It will also indicate the score a golfer is reasonably capable of achieving the next time they go out to play.

The table lists the estimated implementation timeframes for a selection of countries:

Indicative Time Frame*	Country
January	Argentina, Australia, Canada, India, Mexico, Panama, South Africa, Republic of Korea, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela
February – March – April	Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore and Sweden
May – June – July – August	Portugal
September – October – November – December	Great Britain and Ireland

The WHS has two main components – the Rules of Handicapping and the Course Rating System. The Rules of Handicapping are encompassed within seven Rules to inform administrators and golfers on how an official Handicap Index is calculated and administered, with some flexibility given to national associations based on how the sport is played and enjoyed in their region. The Course Rating System, based on the USGA Course Rating System first adopted nearly 50 years ago and already adopted on nearly every continent, sets out a consistent method of determining a course’s difficulty. Together, these components become the foundational elements in determining a golfer’s Handicap Index.

“When the golf community works together, everyone benefits,” said Mike Davis, CEO of the USGA. “We have seen the benefit that handicapping has provided for decades, providing greater enjoyment for all who play. To have a single set of Rules of Handicapping for the game will connect golfers from country to country, and we are excited to bring the best of all worlds together through this initiative.

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Martin Slumbers, Chief Executive of The R&A, said, “The game of golf is transforming to meet the needs of the modern-day golfer; modernizing the Rules this year was an important step forward in that regard and the World Handicap System will be another.

“Our hope is that the launch of the WHS will be a catalyst for change; signalling the start of a new era of golfer engagement, being inclusive by embracing all golfers, whatever their level of ability, and broadening its appeal to a much wider audience.”

“Change also means opportunity and, managed appropriately, this can only be good for the game. It does mean there will be a period of adjustment, as we saw with the new Rules, but once it beds in golfers and golf clubs will benefit in many ways from the new system.”

In preparation for the launch of the WHS, more than 3,000 golf courses have been rated for the first time and an extensive education program has been delivered. By the end of 2019, more than 90 National Associations will have attended an educational seminar and a robust library of resources is hosted on [WHS.com](https://www.worldhandicap.com) to support regional education.

Rules of Handicapping books are being produced and will be translated and delivered through national associations.

In addition, the USGA and The R&A have developed a series of golfer-focused materials, including videos, infographics and posters, which can be used by national associations and shared with golf clubs for the benefit of golfers.

This includes a promotional video [which can be seen here](#) featuring Annika Sorenstam, Gary Player and voices of recreational golfers from around the world to encourage as many golfers as possible to obtain and maintain a handicap.

The materials explain the system’s key features, including:

- Flexibility in formats of play, allowing both competitive and recreational rounds to count for handicap purposes and ensuring that a Handicap Index reflects demonstrated ability
- A minimal number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap; with the number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap being 54 holes from any combination of 18-hole and 9-hole rounds (with some discretion available for national or regional associations)
- An average-based calculation of a handicap, taken from the best eight out of the last 20 scores and factoring in memory of demonstrated ability for better responsiveness/control
- A calculation that considers the impact that abnormal course and weather conditions might have on a player’s performance each day
- Timely handicap revisions
- A limit of Net Double Bogey on the maximum hole score (for handicapping purposes only)
- A maximum handicap limit of 54.0, regardless of gender, to encourage more golfers to measure and track their performance to increase their enjoyment of the game

The formation of a World Handicap System was first conceived in 2011 between the USGA and The R&A in an effort to engage more golfers in the game and promote equity, no matter where golf is played. The effort unites six existing handicapping systems into one, while embracing the many ways the game is played across cultures.

Beginning in 2020, the new WHS will be governed by the USGA and The R&A and administered by national and regional golf associations around the world.

The existing six handicapping authorities, Golf Australia, the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU) in Great Britain and Ireland, the European Golf Association (EGA), the South African Golf Association (SAGA),

the Argentine Golf Association (AAG) and the USGA, represent approximately 15 million golfers in 80 countries who currently maintain a golf handicap.

As an extension of their support of the Rules of Golf worldwide, Rolex has made a commitment to support the USGA's and The R&A's efforts to implement the World Handicap System.

To learn more about the World Handicap System, please visit [usga.org/WHS](https://usga.org/WHS). For WHS information specific to a country, use the Association Finder for further information.

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