

How is the treatment of 9-hole scores changing under the WHS™ in 2024?

Currently, one 9-hole score must be combined with another to create an 18-hole Score Differential™ before it can be counted for handicap purposes.

Beginning in 2024, when a player posts a 9-hole score, the WHS 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.

As part of this change, golfers will be required to play and post all 9 holes with a valid 9-hole Course Rating™ and Slope Rating™ instead of the previous minimum of 7 holes.

How will a golfer's expected score be determined to create an 18-hole Score Differential?

Once the player's 9-hole Score Differential has been calculated, it is combined with an expected Score Differential based on the player's current Handicap Index to create an 18-hole Score Differential.

The expected score is based on the average Score Differential of a player with a given Handicap Index and a normal distribution of scores – so it is not specific to each player.

An expected score can be thought of as a neutral value, meaning that a good 9-hole round (relative to the player's ability) will result in a good 18-hole Score Differential. An average 9-hole round will result in an average 18-hole Score Differential, etc.

What is changing about the way 10–17-hole scores are treated in 2024?

Currently, when 10 to 13 holes are played, scores made on holes 10 through 13 are disregarded and a 9-hole score is posted. When 14-17 holes are played, net par is used for the remaining holes to allow an 18-hole score to be posted.

Beginning in 2024, when a player with a Handicap Index® plays 10-17 holes, a Score Differential™ will be created based on the holes played, and the player's expected Score Differential for the number of remaining holes not played will be added to that value to produce an 18-hole Score Differential.

To facilitate this change, when a player plays between 10-17 holes, they will be required to post their scores hole-by-hole so the appropriate Score Differential can be calculated from the holes that were played to combine with the expected score for the holes not played.

What are the benefits of this change?

Although 10–17-hole rounds are uncommon for most players and are typically a result of circumstances such as darkness, inclement weather, or match play, this change will result in a premium being placed on the holes played, more flexibility in terms of posting scores, and more accurate Score Differentials. Here's why:

- Today, scores made on holes 10-13 are disregarded if fewer than 14 holes are played. The change adds flexibility by allowing scores made on those holes to be used to create an 18-hole Score Differential.
- Currently, when 14-17 holes are played, net par is used on any remaining holes not played. By replacing net par with the use of expected score to produce an 18-hole Score Differential, players will see more equity and consistency – since the expected score is not course-specific or reliant upon the course's stroke index allocation.

How will this change impact the score-posting procedure?

When posting a score, players will now have the option to post a 9-hole score, 18-hole score, or 10-17-hole score. Score posting products will notify the player that if they are posting a score in which 10-17 holes were played, the player will be required to post as a hole-by-hole score. This will allow USGA® Centralized Computation to produce a Score Differential for the holes played and an expected Score Differential for the number of holes that were not played.

Note that score posting products will require a minimum of 9 individual hole scores that correspond to a 9-hole Course Rating™ and Slope Rating™ for a score to be posted.