

FGCC Handicap Committee News & Briefs

Handicap Index, Course Handicap, ESC Explained

There seems to be a lot of discussion about several different topics that all have to do with the USGA handicap system. The FGCC Handicap Committee would like to try to clear up misunderstandings. We will be posting some brief, but specific, articles covering several different topics.

Let us first start with the definition of a *USGA Handicap Index & Course Handicap*.

A “**Handicap Index**” is the USGA’s service mark used to indicate a measurement of a player’s potential ability on a course of standard playing difficulty. It is expressed as a number taken to one decimal place and is issued on a revision date as specified by the local association (Tennessee Golf Association).

A “**Course Handicap**” is the USGA’s mark that indicates the number of handicap strokes a player receives from a specific set of tees at the course being played to adjust the player’s scoring ability to the level of a scratch or 0-handicap golfer. A player’s course handicap is obtained by taking the player’s handicap index and referring to a handicap table.

A course handicap is a whole number (12, 19,...etc) unlike the handicap index (11.5, 18.5,...etc).

The biggest misunderstanding that we hear is that a handicap has to do with a player’s scoring average. This is wrong. The handicap index measures a player’s scoring potential.

Second, the definition of *Equitable Stroke Control or ESC*.

“**Equitable Stroke Control**” (ESC) is the downward adjustment of individual hole scores for handicap purposes in order to make handicaps more representative of a player’s potential ability. ESC sets a maximum number that a player can post on any hole depending on the player’s Course Handicap. ESC is used only when a player’s actual score or most likely score exceeds the player’s maximum number based on the following table.

When you are posting your score you may have noticed that you are asked for the ESC Score.