

## GOLF COURSE RATING FAQ'S

- 1. Who rates our golf course?**

PWGA has a rating team for each of our 8 areas. Each team is headed up by an experienced rating chairwoman, who is trained at a 2-day USGA National Calibration Seminar every other year. We also provide on-course training for all new raters. All of the individuals on the PWGA course rating committee are volunteers.
- 2. How often is a golf course rated?**

USGA has licensed PWGA to rate golf courses according to their guidelines. PWGA is required to re-rate our courses every 10 years. PWGA tries to keep our schedule of re-rating to every 7 years. If there have been any 'significant changes' to your course, we will need to adjust the rating or possibly re-rate it. You would need to notify the Area Rating Chairwoman or the Course Rating Director listed in your PWGA handbook or on this website.
- 3. What 'significant changes' to our course mean that it needs to be re-rated?**

Significant changes would be things such as, change in the length of a hole or holes; size of a green or greens; adding or removing bunkers, water, etc.; changing the height of the rough by an inch or more; contour mowing of fairways making them wider or more narrow by 10 yards or more; moving OB stakes closer in or further out by 10 yards or more; adding a new set of tees. Many times these changes can be reviewed on the course by one of our raters and then be entered into the USGA Course Rating Software to calculate an updated rating, without having to perform a complete re-rate of the entire course.
- 4. When would we need to have a temporary rating?**

For temporary changes to your course (such as using a temporary green or tee), your area rating chairwoman would decide whether or not it would be necessary to modify the rating temporarily or have you post a score of par plus any handicap strokes you are entitled to receive on that hole.
- 5. How is the golf course rated? (the rating procedure)**

The course is rated using the USGA Course Rating System. There are 5 playing length factors considered for each hole for both scratch and bogey golfers (roll, elevation, wind, dogleg/forced lay-ups, and altitude). Any one or a combination of these factors can lengthen or shorten the effective playing length of the course, which will revise the physical yardage for rating purposes.

There are also 10 obstacles we evaluate on each hole (topography, fairway, green target, rough and recoverability, bunkers, OB/extreme rough, water, trees, green surface, and psychology). Each obstacle gets a value taken from a table in the USGA Course Rating Guide,

based on criteria such as the distance from the center of the landing area or target, or how far it is to safely cross the obstacle.

These numbers are plugged into the USGA Course Rating System Software to achieve a scratch and bogey rating, which is used to arrive at a slope number.

6. **What is a Bogey golfer?**

A female bogey golfer is a player who has a course handicap of approximately 24 on a course of standard difficulty. For rating purposes, a female bogey golfer can hit her tee shots 150 yards (130 with 20 yards of roll), and fairway shots 130 yards (110 with 20 yards of roll) at sea level.

7. **What is a Scratch golfer?**

A female scratch golfer is a player who can play to course handicap of zero on any and all rated golf courses. For rating purposes, a female scratch golfer can hit her tee shots an average of 210 yards (190 with 20 yards of roll), and fairway shots 190 yards (170 with 20 yards of roll) at sea level.

8. **What is the Rating?**

The USGA 'Course Rating' is an indicator of the playing difficulty of a course for a scratch golfer under normal course and weather conditions. It is based on yardage and obstacles to the extent that they affect the scoring difficulty of the scratch golfer.

The 'Bogey Rating' (not to be confused with Slope) represents the playing difficulty for the bogey golfer under normal course and weather conditions. This number is a target score that a bogey player could expect to shoot about half the time. If the bogey rating does not appear on the rating sheet at a course you are playing, you can use the following formula to figure it out:

Slope divided by 4.24 plus the course rating equals the bogey rating

EXAMPLE: You have a slope of 120 and a rating of 71.6

You take  $120 / 4.24 (+ 71.6) = 99.9$  (Bogey Rating or target score)

9. **What is Slope?**

Slope tells us how much more difficult the course plays for higher handicappers versus lower handicappers. The rating for scratch and bogey is calculated, and it's the gap between the two that determines the slope. The slope number is used to convert your Handicap Index into a Course Handicap. This allows the player to receive enough strokes from a particular set of tees, to play at an equal level with a scratch golfer from the same set of tees. The system was designed to allow a golfer to take her handicap index to almost any course in the world and be able to compete on an equal level with other golfers.

10. **Why does the Slope seem too low or too high?**

When obstacles affect the scratch and/or bogey players, things will happen to the slope. Of course, the bogey golfer is more susceptible to trouble on holes, the kind of trouble that can make scores soar. This will force the bogey rating higher, widen the gap between scratch and bogey ratings, and result in a higher slope. On the other side of the coin, if the scratch player has long approach shots to the green and bogey is able to pitch or chip to the green, both of the ratings will increase because of length, but the gap between bogey and scratch ratings will be less, resulting in a lower slope. This can explain how a shorter course can be issued a slope that seems a little too high, and a longer course may be issued a slope that seems a little low.

11. **How does the course rating and slope affect my handicap?**

To fully understand how the rating and slope affect your handicap index, you must first understand how the handicap index is derived.

Using equitable stroke control (the maximum score you can take on a hole for posting purposes), a player takes her adjusted gross score and subtracts the course rating. Multiply that number by 113 (slope rating of a golf course of standard difficulty), and divide by the slope of the tees played. Round up to the nearest tenth.

Example: Handicap differential =  
(Adjusted gross score - course rating) x 113/slope of tees played

A player's index is based on the best handicap differentials in the golfer's scores posted. There is a chart in the USGA Handicap System manual that shows how to determine the amount of handicap differentials being used (Section 10-2). It's important to remember that the course rating affects a player's index much more than the slope.

12. **Why did our course rating and slope change?**

A course rating and slope may change when your course is re-rated. Things change on a course in between ratings. Some of the changes to the course could be to the Effective Playing Length, the addition or subtraction of Obstacles, maintenance of the course with respect to green speeds, rough height, etc. Another reason could be that USGA may have made changes to the rating procedures since your course was last rated.

13. **What is the minimum yardage of a golf course to have a USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating?**

In order to qualify for a USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating, a course must have a minimum of 3,000 yards for 18 holes (1,500 yards for nine holes), and must have one long hole as follows:

- A. For any combination of nine holes, there must be at least one hole that requires a woman scratch golfer to hit a shot greater than 210 yards.

- B. For any combination greater than nine holes, there must be at least two holes that require a woman scratch golfer to hit a shot greater than 210 yards.

When a golf course is shorter than this length, the basic assumptions in the USGA Course Rating System no longer hold true, and the formula for converting the effective playing length into strokes fails.

14. **Does PWGA measure the golf course?**  
NCGA (Northern California Golf Association) takes measurements from all sets of tees when they come out to measure the course. They transmit a measurement record to the PWGA Course Rating Director. PWGA does however, have access to a measuring team that will come out to measure the women's tees if needed.
15. **When you rate our course, do you also handicap the holes?**  
The handicapping of the holes is not done by the course raters. Typically, the handicapping of the holes is done by length, with odds on the front nine and evens on the back nine. If your club feels the holes should be handicapped differently, there are guidelines to follow in the USGA Handicap System manual in Section 17, or refer to the USGA website.