

SILGA Tee It Forward Handicap Comparison
Modified from “Rules with Martin” in the March 2019 issue of The Veranda

A popular topic of discussion lately is how to compute course handicaps for a club golf event where members are playing from different sets of tees. Please note that a golf club may not ignore Section 3-5 when players are competing from a different USGA Course Rating as doing so would be waiving a Rule of Golf. The Committee in Charge of a competition does not have the authority to waive a Rule of Golf (see Decision 3-5/2).

Before we dive into computing a player’s handicap, let’s cover some basic terminology.

Handicap Index: A player’s handicap index is a number that indicates a player’s skill and is taken to one decimal place (ie. 10.4). You never actually use this index while playing; rather, you must first convert it to the course rating/slope of the specific set of tees you are playing in order to get a Course Handicap. *NOTE: A handicap index is not established or developed from a particular set of tees.

Course Handicap: 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.

Course Rating and Course Slope

Rating: A USGA Course Rating is an evaluation of the difficulty of a golf course for scratch golfers (a golfer with a 0 handicap). The rating of a golf course is represented by a two-digit number with a decimal point (ie 68.5 or 72.3). The lower the number, the easier the golf course is for a scratch golfer. The higher the number, the harder the golf course is for a scratch golfer.

Slope: The USGA Course Slope is an evaluation of the difficulty of a golf course for bogey golfers. This number can range from 55 to 155. The lower the slope rating, the easier the golf course is for a bogey golfer. The higher the slope rating, the harder the golf course is for a bogey golfer.

*Both the course rating and slope can always be found on a course’s scorecard.

Example: Susan and Barbara both have a handicap index of 29.6 and they are playing in the weekly SILGA game. Susan is going to play the Finch (yellow) tees and Barbara is going to play the Heron (blue) tees on Ocean Winds. How would Susan and Barbara compute handicaps for their group in SILGA? First, both players need to find out their course handicap from their respective tee using their handicap index.

There are multiple ways to find out this information:

- a. Use the GHIN app on your smartphone to compute your course handicap.
- b. Stop in the Golf Shop or locker room and check the Course Handicap Report by the Handicap Computer.
- c. Google “computing course handicap.” The first link to pop up should be the USGA Course Handicap Calculator.

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Susan’s course handicap from the Finch tees is 34 and Barbara’s course handicap from the Heron tees is 32. Both players receive their course handicap from their respective tees; however, since both players are playing from different tees, there will be an adjustment to the course handicaps because of the difference in course ratings. The course rating for the Finch tees is 72.6 and the course rating for the Heron tees is 68.5, making a difference of 4.1. If the difference isn’t a whole number, round up or down to the nearest whole number. We recommend the player that is playing the shorter tees reduce their handicap.

Handicaps will look like the following: Susan: 34 & Barbara: 28

So, even though they have the same USGA Index, Susan will receive 6 more strokes than Nancy because Nancy is playing an easier course (blue tee vs. yellow tee).

Below is a list of ratings from The Seabrook Island Club’s courses from their respective tees:

Ocean Winds Women:

Egret (white) – 74.6

Finch (yellow) – 72.6

Heron (blue) – 68.5

Crooked Oaks Women:

Egret (white) – 73.4

Finch (yellow) – 70.7

Heron (blue) – 67.7

See attached chart to determine what your handicap would be if your group is playing from mixed tees (Finch & Heron).