

Peer review – it's everybody's responsibility!

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There are two basic premises which underlie the USGA Handicap System. First, each player is expected to make the best score they can at each and every hole they play regardless of where the round is played. Second, the golfer is expected to post every acceptable round for peer review purposes. Let's decipher peer review and how it affects our games.

Uncovering the myth Peer review is often misunderstood to mean it is the handicap committee's responsibility to monitor and review each club member's score file. Although that is a part of the committee responsibility, it is incumbent upon all fellow club members to participate in peer review.

What is peer review? Peer review is defined in the USGA Handicap

System as "the ability of golfers to gain an understanding of a player's potential ability and form a reasonable basis for supporting or disputing a score that has been posted." So what does that mean to you as a member of your golf club? It is your responsibility, as you play with fellow club members to make sure each member posts correctly and accurately. If a fellow member is not posting or not posting accurate scores, it is your obligation to alert the handicap committee. The committee can then take any steps necessary to ensure the golfer has an index which is representative of their playing ability.

You might not know... Posting accurately includes posting the adjusted gross score, including posting a par-plus for any holes not played or not played under *The Rules of Golf* and posting any most-likely scores for holes not completed.

A real-life example Alysa and I are fellow club members who have decided to leave work early and enjoy a casual round of golf. At the completion of 18 holes, Alysa goes straight to the posting computer and records her score. I, on the other hand, go into the lounge to check on the Red Sox game and didn't post my score. When Alysa questions my actions, I reply, "The score won't have an impact on my index, so I'm not going to post."

The consequence If at that point nothing further is done, then both Alysa and I have failed in our responsibilities. I have failed for not posting an acceptable score and Alysa has failed for not contacting the handicap committee and notifying them of my failure to post.



Peer review requires all players, regardless of skill level, to adjust and post scores.

Acting in good faith The USGA-recognized Handicap Index is a mark accepted by golfers across the United States and abroad that tells of the player's ability. As was described in a USGA handicap article, think of the index as a letter of introduction — in essence, the golfer's club is vouching for its member's playing ability. The club knows this because they have a reasonable and regular opportunity to play golf with one another. Golfers are further basing this good faith acceptance on the reasonable assumption the fellow player has posted all of his acceptable scores.

Does this include me? Peer review applies to all levels of golfers, even the self-proclaimed "scratch" golfers. There is a fallacy that if a golfer only plays in scratch events, the posting of scores is not important. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the only valid reflection of the player's potential can come from the posting of all scores. In order to compete in a gross event, typically there is an index requirement to be met. Without a true index, this player may be accepting a spot in place of another golfer who's legitimately earned that Handicap Index by posting all of their scores.

So remember, the next time you are out enjoying a round of golf, participate in peer review. It's good for the game and it's your responsibility! ■