



Handicap Committees must include a Handicap Chair, who is required to attend a training through the SCGA.

The Handicap Committee: Who are they and what do they do?

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It's summertime! While you're poolside drinking your favorite beverage, your Handicap Committee is hard at work, slaving over a hot computer, ensuring everything is in order for your club scoring records (along with multiple other tasks they're responsible for). Who are these people and what do they do?

First, a Handicap Committee is a requirement by the USGA in order for a golf club to be in compliance and authorized. There are 17 items on the *Club Compliance Checklist*, and having a Handicap Committee is the second one listed. The requirements are part of the USGA Handicap System, which serves the purpose of making the game more enjoyable by enabling players of differing abilities to compete on an equitable basis. If a golf club is *not* in compliance, they may not be allowed to use any part of the USGA Handicap System, which includes issuing a Handicap Index and using Course and Slope ratings.

How does one get on the Handicap Committee? Each club may handle the selection of committee members differently, including choosing the Handicap Chair. There must be a Handicap Chair who is a member of the club but not an employee of the club (if it's a green grass facility). Employees of the club may *serve* on the Handicap Committee, but the majority of committee members should be members of the club. Some Handicap Chairs are elected by the membership and others are appointed by the club's board. The Committee members may be the executive board, volunteers, friends of the Handicap Chair, someone from the golf shop, or someone with their eye on the future Handicap Chair position.

In working with the Handicap Chair, what is the Committee's job? We know that having a Handicap Committee is an essential element of the USGA Handicap System. In fact, every club that uses the Handicap System must have a Handicap Committee to ensure the integrity (honesty, truth, honor, reliability) of each Handicap Index it issues. That's a BIG job! But that's just part of it.

Education is the other big part of what the Handicap Committee does, such as how to correctly post a score, how to use the Equitable Stroke Control table or what is a most-likely score. Along with education comes the discipline that must take place to ensure a person's Handicap Index reflects their potential scoring ability. A player must *earn* a Handicap Index; no

player has an inherent right to one without providing full evidence of his or her ability to the golf club's Handicap Committee. Players have to follow the USGA Handicap System and the club guidelines set by the Handicap Chair and Committee. The Handicap Committee where a player maintains a handicap can adjust that player's Handicap Index but only as warranted by the USGA Handicap System. Bear in mind that is different from a committee in charge of an event changing a *Course Handicap* for a player for a particular tournament.

The disciplinary actions set forth by the USGA for the Handicap Committee to use are:

- 1 Penalty Scores** — may be issued by the Handicap Committee to members for not posting scores.
- 2 Adjustments/Modifications** — may be issued by the Committee to members so their index is a reflection of their potential scoring ability, or as a disciplinary action to those who do not observe the spirit of the USGA Handicap System. The Committee has the ultimate authority to adjust an index under any circumstance that it feels necessary to do so.
- 3 Withdrawal of the Handicap Index** — the Handicap Committee must withdraw the Handicap Index of a player who repeatedly fails to meet the player responsibilities under the USGA Handicap System.

Wow, now it hits you. This is serious stuff! A Handicap Committee's ultimate responsibility is to ensure the members of your club are following the USGA Handicap System and posting scores properly. Not only do the scoring records reflect members at the club, but reflect your club when members play at another club or in a different city, county, or state and in national tournaments or events. Yes, golf is only a game but treat it, and your Handicap Committee, with the respect that it deserves.

Questions about your Handicap Index? Contact your club's Handicap Chair or e-mail handicap@scga.org. ■