

COMPETING FROM DIFFERENT TEES



Suppose you and a friend (or your spouse) decide to play a match. One of you favors using the forward tees, while the other wants to play from the back tees. Can you still have a fair match?

Yes, you can. The USGA's Handicap System allows players to use separate tees, yet still compete on an equitable basis. Normally, two players will have different Course Handicaps, so one player receives strokes from the other in a match. But what happens if each golfer plays from different tees? The golfer playing from the more difficult tees—those with a higher USGA Course Rating (normally the back tees) -- receives extra strokes as well.

Let's demonstrate this concept by reviewing a match between Uncle Snoopy and Woodstock at Beagle Haven Country Club. Snoopy, who has an 11.6 USGA Handicap Index, plays from the more difficult Beagle tees with a higher Course Rating of 73.5. Snoopy checks the Course Handicap Table located at the clubhouse or near the first tee) and finds he has a Course Handicap of 13 that day.

Meanwhile, Woodstock plays from the easier forward tees with a lower Course Rating of 70.9. Since Woodstock has a Handicap Index of 17.8, he checks the Course Handicap Table and finds he has a Course Handicap of 20 that day.

Normally, Uncle Snoopy would give Woodstock seven strokes ($20 - 13 = 7$). But, in this instance, Uncle Snoopy's Course Rating is 2.6 higher than Woodstock's Course Rating ($73.5 - 70.9 = 2.6$). A decimal of .5 or more is rounded off to the higher number, so 2.6 becomes 3. Thus, Snoopy gives Woodstock only four strokes instead of seven because Snoopy is playing from more difficult tees.

This formula works for humans the same as for beagles and birds. When you and your opponent compete from different tees, you need to do two things in order to give or receive the right number of strokes. First, look up your Handicap Index on the Course Handicap Table to find your Course Handicap for the set of tees you play that day and compare it to your opponent's total for his or her tees; the player with the higher Course Handicap receives strokes.

Second, compare your Course Rating for the set of tees you play with that of your opponent for the set of tees he or she plays; the golfer playing from the set of tees with a higher Course Rating receives the number of strokes equaling the difference between the two Course Ratings.

The USGA's Handicap System allows you to compete on an equitable basis with your partner, even if you both play from different sets of tees. Remember that it's okay to move to the forward tees one day or the back tees the next. Just choose the set of tees where you'll have the most fun on a given day—and play away, please!