

The Slant on Slope

Most golfers believe that the higher the slope number, the more difficult the golf course. This may or may not be true depending on the level of golfer you are. The Slope number for a golf course actually tells you how difficult the golf course is for a bogey player compared to a scratch player. A male "bogey golfer" is a player who has a Course Handicap of approximately 20 on a course of standard difficulty. He can hit tee shots an average of 200 yards and reach a 370-yard hole in two shots at sea level. A "scratch golfer" is a player who can play to a Course Handicap of zero on any and all rated golf courses. A male scratch golfer, for rating purposes, can hit tee shots an average of 250 yards and can reach a 470-yard hole in two shots at sea level.

The higher the Slope number, the harder the course is for the bogey golfer relative to the difficulty of the course for the scratch golfer. Slope numbers can range anywhere between 55 and 155 with the standard Slope of a golf course at 113.

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 to a scratch golfer from the same set of tees. To determine a course handicap the player will look up their Handicap Index on the Slope chart for the set of tees that they will be playing. Using the chart to the right, if a player has a Handicap Index of 13.4 and the set of tees they are playing has a Slope rating of 130 their course handicap for that round would be a 15.

It is important to remember that the course rating affects a player's index much more than the Slope number. Often, players focus too much on what the Slope number is when it is the course rating number that drives the system.

For example:

Course A
69.3/125
Player shoots 85
Handicap differential = 14.2
[(85-69.3) x 113/ 125]

Course B
71.1/117
Player shoots 85
Handicap differential = 13.4
[(85-71.1) x 113/117]

Some players feel that if their golf course's Slope number is too high, they will not be competitive when visiting another club. This is not necessarily true. The above example shows the significance the course rating has on a player's handicap differential compared to the Slope number.

When you are playing a course with a Slope rating higher than 113, your course handicap will be the same or higher than your index – the higher the Slope and the higher your index, the greater the difference. Conversely, if you play a course with a Slope rating lower than 113, your course handicap may be lower than your Handicap Index.

The Slope number is derived from the following mathematical formula:
(Bogey Rating – Course Rating) x 5.381 = **Slope**

When your course is rated, a scratch rating and bogey rating are both determined from each set of tees. (The scratch rating is the same as the course rating). From both the bogey rating and the scratch rating, we can then use the formula above to achieve our Slope number.

Why do we need all of these numbers? The system was developed to allow a player to take his Handicap Index to almost any course in the world and be able to compete on an equal level with other golfers.

SLOPE RATING - 130			
SCGA/USGA Handicap Index	Course HDCP	SCGA/USGA Handicap Index	Course HDCP
+3.5 to +3.1	+4	18.7 to 19.5	22
+3.0 to +2.2	+3	19.6 to 20.4	23
+2.1 to +1.4	+2	20.5 to 21.2	24
+1.3 to +.5	+1	21.3 to 22.1	25
+0.4 to .4	0	22.2 to 23.0	26
0.5 to 1.3	1	23.1 to 23.9	27
1.4 to 2.1	2	24.0 to 24.7	28
2.2 to 3.0	3	24.8 to 25.6	29
3.1 to 3.9	4	25.7 to 26.5	30
4.0 to 4.7	5	26.6 to 27.3	31
4.8 to 5.6	6	27.4 to 28.2	32
5.7 to 6.5	7	28.3 to 29.1	33
6.6 to 7.3	8	29.2 to 29.9	34
7.4 to 8.2	9	30.0 to 30.8	35
8.3 to 9.1	10	30.9 to 31.7	36
9.2 to 9.9	11	31.8 to 32.5	37
10.0 to 10.8	12	32.6 to 33.4	38
10.9 to 11.7	13	33.5 to 34.3	39
11.8 to 12.6	14	34.4 to 35.2	40
12.7 to 13.4	15	35.3 to 36.0	41
13.5 to 14.3	16	36.1 to 36.9	42
14.4 to 15.2	17	37.0 to 37.8	43
15.3 to 16.0	18	37.9 to 38.6	44
16.1 to 16.9	19	38.7 to 39.5	45
17.0 to 17.8	20	39.6 to 40.4	46
17.9 to 18.6	21		