

# The New Golf Croquet Handicapping System

## Why Change?

A Handicap System should give players of any handicap a 50% chance of winning against any other handicap in a Handicap game. This was not the case with the current and previous systems where the strongest players won far too many of their handicap games.

The ACA has therefore approved a National roll out of a New System for Golf Croquet Handicaps. The New System replaces the current system, which was contained as an appendix to the WCF Golf Croquet Rules 2013. The new system is to be adopted in all states without any variation.

The New System is broadly in line with a new one adopted by the Croquet Association (CA) for use within the United Kingdom, and subsequently adopted by Croquet New Zealand with some modifications.

It has been carefully considered and was thoroughly tested across the East Anglia Croquet Federation (part of the CA) during their 2015 playing season.

The New System was developed by Robert Fulford, Jonathan Kirby and James Hopgood, 3 highly ranked croquet players who are also qualified mathematicians. They started by analysing over 6300 handicap games played under the old system and another 3000 handicap games played under trial conditions before making a recommendation to the CA that changes be implemented.

The New System opens up the handicap range at both ends, to avoid the distortions of previous systems. The trigger points (and points exchanged in level play) follow the mathematical principles of the Elo rating system, long used in many sports (originally chess) for rankings, and also used in the AC handicap system.

The New System is markedly better, giving all players a much fairer chance. It is expected to be a more robust system in the longer term, as has been the case with the AC handicapping system which has worked for 25 years in the UK (and about a decade in Australia) without significant change.

## When does the New System Start?

The New System will start from 3 April, 2017.

## How does the New System work?

### How does it affect me?

The New System is simple and straightforward. Although it has a greater range than previously the great majority of players who have handicaps between 11 & 3 will find their handicap unchanged.

Because the New System is open at both ends it allows people to find their own levels. Although there are trigger points for handicaps from 20 to -6 the extremes of this range will rarely be used.

The handicap index has been re-based, so even though most players handicaps will not change, their index will be much higher. For the best players, their handicap index and ranking grade will be similar values.

You still gain or lose 10 index points for a singles handicap game result, 5 for a doubles handicap game.

The New System works just like the old one in the middle ranges, with players giving and receiving the same number of Extra Turns against "middle range" opponents as before. But at both extremes the weaker players will receive more ET's than before and the strongest player (1 and below) will have to give more ET's than before.

The “points exchanged in level play” table has been reworked to cover the wider handicap range but works the same way as previously.

The same points are exchanged regardless of whether it is a 7, 13 or 19 point game, and the doubles calculations also work as before.

During the trial it was found that the CA’s aim for the New System were well met and it was popular with those who used it. We hope you find it a positive improvement.

## What will my Handicap be?

There are 7 rules. The majority of players will be covered by Rule A- most rules are simple but the ones for the lowest handicaps are a bit trickier!

**Rule A:**

if your existing handicap is between 12 & 6: keep your existing handicap and add 1100 to your existing index to get your new index.

**Rule B:**

if your existing handicap is 5: keep your existing handicap and add 1150 to your existing index.

**Rule C:**

if your existing handicap is 4 or 3: keep your existing handicap and add 1200 to your existing index. IF your NEW index is 1800 or above your new handicap becomes 2; otherwise keep your old handicap.

**Rule D:**

if your existing handicap is 12 and you have been struggling to get your index much above 0, ask your club handicapper to reset your handicap to 14 with a new index of 1050

**Rule E:**

a complete new beginner should be started on 16,14,12 or lower- the three times round test has been updated and should be used to set initial handicaps.

**Rule F:**

if your existing handicap is 2 or below and you DO have a current GC World Ranking Grade, take that grade and use that for your new handicap index. Look up the trigger point table and take the handicap of the trigger point which is at or below your current grade. See also the Note below.

**Rule G:**

if your existing handicap is 2 or below and you DO NOT have a current GC World Ranking Grade. Club Handicappers (with the assistance of State Handicapper if necessary) will need to assess an appropriate handicap and index having regard to the handicap of others who are on similar handicaps and indexes under the old system. See also the Note which follows.

**Note: for Rules F & G:** no player’s handicap should increase above their old Handicap under this conversion. For example, if someone had a 1 handicap and a Ranking Grade of 1798, they should NOT be changed to 3 with an index of 1798. Instead they should remain as a 1 with an index of 1900.

## What Happens Now

The ACA will issue an initial supply of new GC Handicap Cards to all states. The card is in a new format- it will be A5 in size (an A4 card folded once only).

There will be a separate insert for the card which shows various instructions and tables and should be carried forward from one card to the next. It is also suitable for display on Club Noticeboards.

Once the initial supply of cards and inserts is exhausted states and clubs should print their own replacements. The forms will be available for download from the ACA website

The ACA GC Handicapping Regulations will also be updated and will be available on the ACA website.

A revised version of Law 16 of the Rules of Golf Croquet will apply in Australia. It is available on the ACA website.

## The UK Trial

Analysis of the trial conducted in the East Anglia Region showed that the system worked well for the great bulk of players- those whose handicaps are between 4 & 10.

Under the old system against the bulk of players (4-10) the lowest handicappers won the majority of the matches (0's won 75% and 1's won 63%).

Under the new system the minus players won 45%, the 0's won 44% and the 1's won 41%.

Under the old system against the highest handicappers the lowest handicaps won 81% of their games. Under the New System this reduces to 58%.

The New System allowed the highest handicapped played to win 38% of their games against players on 3 and below, previously this %age was only 22%.

It was acknowledged that no Handicap system can be perfect. In particular high handicap players who rarely play against lower handicapped players and have little coaching in using Extra Turns are unlikely to have a good, fair game against such players whatever number of Extra Turns they have. However, the authors firmly believed that the New System was better than its predecessor and that it was good enough that whatever small improvement might be made by further tinkering would not justify the time and complication of further trials.

The New System largely removes the advantage the top players have, it works well for the great bulk of players (Handicaps 4-10) and gives more chance to the highest handicapped players.

The detailed evidence collected, the mathematical analysis & a fuller version of the conclusions is available at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/saayh8pfe04hatk/AABHtzQaEvDRFE3qHHyF2lJOa?dl=0>