

Golf games and how they are scored

Most games of golf are based on the original forms, match play or stroke play.

From these variations have been developed to enhance the playing experience.

Stroke Play

The score at each hole is entered on the score card, totalled and the player's full handicap deducted. The player who completes the stipulated round in the fewest net strokes is the winner.

Match Play

This traditional form of the game sees two individuals or two sides competing against each other with the number of holes won or lost deciding the match. The match is completed when one side is ahead after the stipulated number of holes or is more holes up than the number of holes remaining to be played.

The number of strokes awarded in this competition is the difference between the players' handicaps. Where there are more than 18 strokes difference between players' handicaps, the higher handicapped players will receive 2 or 3 strokes per hole where applicable. It is usual for the Committee to prescribe sudden-death continuation if a match is all square after the required holes. In this case handicap strokes are used as in the original round.

In four-ball match play, the lowest marker reverts to scratch and gives strokes to the higher markers, eg A is on a 4 handicap, B on 8, C on 12 and D on 27. A receives no strokes, B gets 4 strokes, C gets 8 strokes and D gets 23 strokes, irrespective of who is A's partner.

Stableford

This system of scoring by points was introduced by Dr Frank Stableford of the Wallasey Golf Club (Liverpool, England) in 1932 and is the most common event played at club level.

Stableford involves scoring points based on results at each hole. Using the index for each hole, players are able to make a mental allocation of their full handicap for each of the 18 holes. For example, a player on a handicap of 18 will add one shot to the par value of each hole to determine their own par for the hole. Thus a hole rated as a par 4 becomes a par 5 for the player.

The points scoring method is then calculated by allocating two points for a par, one point for one over, three points for one under, four points for two under, and so on. For example, a player receiving a stroke on a par 4 hole scores 4 giving them a net 3; for this the player receives 3 points. A player at a par 3 hole scores a 4 but does not receive a stroke; for this the player would receive 1 point; a player with 2 strokes on a par 5 hole scores a 6, giving them a nett 4 and 3 points.

Players who exceed their own par by two strokes score no points for the hole and, since they cannot improve on that result, they should pick up their ball. At the end of the round all points scored are added up and the player having the highest number of points is the winner. When marking the score card, the number of strokes taken must always be shown for holes where points are scored. Thus, the card records both strokes and points.

Points	Strokes taken in relation to adjusted fixed score after application of handicap on ho
0	2 strokes or more over, or no score recorded, a wipe
1	1 stroke over
2	Same number of strokes
3	1 stroke under
4	2 strokes under
5	3 strokes under
6	4 strokes under

Individual Par

Players need to allocate full handicap strokes to each hole, as explained for Individual Stableford competition.

Once players mentally determine their own par for each hole, the Individual Par competition challenges them to beat their own par. If players do exceed their par, they score a '+' (plus) for the hole. If players equal their own par, they are said to have halved the hole which is scored with an 'O'. If par is not achieved, a '-' (minus) sign is recorded. At the end of the round the plus and minus signs are added and the net result written in as so many 'up', 'down' or 'halved'.

A player is allowed their full stroke handicap and the strokes are taken at holes as indicated on the card.

Where the handicap is more than 18, two strokes will be allowed on the number of holes that the handicap exceeds 18.

Once again, when marking the score card, the number of strokes taken must always be shown for holes where an 'O' or '+' is scored. Thus, the card records both strokes and plus, half or minus.

For ease of explanation, assume a player's handicap gives them one stroke per hole (e.g., an 18-hole handicap of 18). This player, playing to their handicap on a given day, will average a bogey on each hole. Playing 'to' ones handicap is expected and so there is no reward or punishment due when a bogey five is recorded on a par four. Thus, a 0 (zero/half) is recorded. A six (one over what's expected from a player on a 18 handicap, would incur a penalty of a minus '-' (loss). A four (a genuine, unadjusted par) is one better than a '18-handicapper' would be expected to score and would earn a plus '+' (win).

However, for this golfer, sixes and above still incur just one minus '-'. Likewise, fours and below earn just one plus '+'. At the end of the round, pluses and minuses are reconciled (a minus cancels out a plus). If a player finishes with two pluses, they are 'two up' or 'plus two' (+2). The opposite applies if they finish with two minuses - 'two down'; 'minus 2'; '-2'.

Bisque Par

This event is a variation of the Individual Par competition, where players allocate their full handicap to each hole however they like. It is not necessary to allocate your handicap before the event, as this is normally done on a hole-by-hole basis. In Bisque Par competitions, players will determine their handicap stroke allocation for a hole after playing that hole (and mark that allocation on the score card at that time). The allocation of handicap strokes will obviously cease once the player's full handicap has been used. The game is then played as an Individual Par competition, and scored in the same fashion.

Foursomes

Two players play as partners and use one ball. The partners strike off alternately from the tee and thereafter strike the ball alternately during the play of each hole. Scoring is done as for a stroke round and the total is subject to a deduction of half the partners' aggregate handicaps. Note: If either player incurs a penalty stroke it does not alter the rotation of play.

So player A hits off the first tee player B hits the next shot and alternating until the ball is holed.

Player B hits off the second hole and player A plays the second shot, etc.

Canadian Foursomes

This event is played as per a Foursomes event except that both players play tee shots at every hole and afterwards continue with whichever ball they nominate, with the partner playing the second stroke. Handicap allowance is $\frac{3}{8}$ of aggregate stroke handicap for stroke competitions.

American Foursomes

Both players play tee shots at each hole, then play a second stroke with their partner's ball. One ball is then selected and play proceeds as in foursomes, so that if Player B hit the second shot with the selected ball, Player A hits the next shot and play alternates until the hole is completed. Handicap allowance is $\frac{3}{8}$ of aggregate stroke handicap for stroke competitions.

Ambrose

This event can be played as a two, three or four-person event. Each player plays a tee shot at each hole. The Captain then selects the best drive which is then played by its owner. The other members retrieve their balls and in turn drop within one club-length of the selected position and play their second shots. This procedure of selecting the best position continues

until a ball is holed. When on the green, balls are placed on the selected spot. The most common method of determining handicap is: Two-person event – 1/4 of aggregate stroke handicap; Three-person event – 1/6 of aggregate handicap; Four-person event – 1/8 of stroke handicap. Special rules concerning team composition or number of tee shots per player or player elimination for a shot can be applied.

Fourballs

Four-Ball Best Ball Stableford (4BBB or 2BBB)

Two players play as partners each taking strokes at holes as in a stableford competition. The better point score on a hole from either of the pair becomes the team score for that hole. In a four-ball handicap event care must be taken to mark the scores of each player in separate columns headed by the initials of the player. If the scores are mixed and it is impossible for the Committee to check the card the players will be disqualified.

These are often played in conjunction with the individual competition on the day.

Some Variations

Four-Ball Aggregate Stableford

As the name implies, the Stableford system is used in this event and the competition is played with a partner, as in a Four-Ball Stableford. Individual full handicaps are applied to each player and the number of points scored by each player is recorded at the end of every hole, as well as a total or aggregate for the team. The team having the highest number of points is the winner. Again, when marking the score card, the number of strokes taken must always be shown for holes where points are scored. Thus, the card records both strokes and points for each player as well as team points.

Four-Ball Stableford Multiplier

Individual full handicaps are applied to each player and the number of points scored by each player is recorded at the end of every hole, as well as a total product for the team. eg. player A gets 2 points and player B gets 3 points gives a team score of 6 points; Player A scores 0 points, player B scores 5 points, team score is 0 points for that hole. The team having the highest number of points is the winner.

Irish Fourball or Worst ball

Similar to a 4BBB except the worst score of either player is used as the team score. The team with the highest score wins.

Countdown

A team event where the individual stableford scores of team members are used to calculate the team score for each hole. Usually a 6543 format is used. The first six holes only the best

score is used for the team score, the next 5 holes, the best 2 scores are added for the team score, the next 4 holes, the best 3 scores are added and the last 3 holes all team scores are used.

Split Six

A new variety of a 2-person team event involving best ball, aggregate and multiplier. On the first six holes the best of the team's stableford score is recorded for the team. On the next six, the aggregate of each player's stableford score are used. The last six involves multiplying together each player's stableford score. The team with the highest total is the winner.

Eclectic

Competitors play two or more rounds and the eclectic score is the lowest stroke score obtained at each hole on the rounds. Sometimes the competitions extend over the whole season and the total score for the holes is subject to deduction of $\frac{1}{2}$ the player's handicap held on the last day of competition.