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How the System 36 Handicap Formula Works in Golf

Calculate a Golf Handicap and Net Score Using System 36

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System 36 is a same-day handicapping system that allows golfers who don't have official handicap indexes to play in tournaments that require the use of [net scores](#).

Note that System 36 is not a substitute for a USGA Handicap Index (or any other official handicap). That is, if a tournament requires an official handicap, you can't show up without one and say, "Hey, just use System 36 for me." That won't work.

System 36—like the [Callaway System](#) and [Peoria System](#), two other same-day handicap formulas—will, if tournament organizers use it, it'll be found at charity tournaments, corporate outings, association playdays and the like. Tournaments where organizers want to award low-net titles or prizes but know that many golfers playing won't have official handicaps.

System 36 assigns a point value to a golfer's scores (pars, bogeys, etc.). At the end of the round, add up those point values and subtract from 36. That becomes the golfer's handicap for the round just completed.

The Point Values in System 36

Throughout the [round](#), the golfer accrues points based on the following formula:

A [double bogey](#) or worse is worth 0 points.

A [bogey](#) is worth 1 point.

[Pars](#) and everything better than par—birdie—are 2 points each.

Following your round, you (or the tournament organizers) examine your scorecard and make a note of how many each of those types of scores you made. Let's run through an example, plus

how to use that point total you come up with.

Calculating Your Net Score Using System 36

So you play a round of golf, putt out on the 18th hole and head to the clubhouse. Remember: System 36 handicaps are calculated *after* the round is finished. So now what?

At the end of the round, the first step is toting up your points accrued based on the per-score point values listed above. For example, let's say you recorded a score of 90, and along the way to that 90, you had seven pars, nine bogeys, and two double-bogeys or worse.

First, calculate your accrued points:

$$7 \text{ (pars)} \times 2 \text{ (points per par)} = 14 \text{ points}$$

$$9 \text{ (bogeys)} \times 1 \text{ (point per bogey)} = 9$$

$$2 \text{ (doubles or worse)} \times 0 \text{ (points per double)} = 0$$

You accrued a total of 23 points during your round of 90.

The next step in the System 36 calculation is subtracting that total from 36 (it's always deducted from 36, hence the name of this one-day handicapping method).

You earned 23 points, so:

$$36 \text{ minus } 23 = 13$$

And that result—13, in this example—is your handicap allowance for the round of 90 you just completed. Apply that handicap allowance to your [gross score](#) to determine your net score:

$$90 \text{ (gross score)} - 13 \text{ (handicap allowance)} = 77 \text{ (net score)}$$

So 77 is your net score based on System 36 handicapping. And that's how to calculate a System 36 handicap.

Note that if System 36 is in use, tournament organizers should make that clear before you sign up to play in any tournament. You can't play a net tournament unless you have a real handicap index, or the tournament organizers are using something along the lines of System 36.