

# Handicap help

The hardest hole at your course may not be the #1 stroke hole



Most courses have a particular hole that strikes fear into all players. It usually requires a long approach shot and boasts plenty of hazards and perhaps a dastardly green thrown in the mix for good measure.

It seems logical that such a nasty golf hole would be designated the course's #1 stroke hole for handicap competition purposes but if the RCGA recommendation of procedure for allocating stroke holes is followed, its place on the scorecard may surprise you.

The hole that is toughest for all players is not likely the hole on which you most need a handicap stroke. A handicap stroke is intended to be an equalizer and should be available on a hole where the variance in score between a low handicapper and a high handicapper is greatest.

Let's compare a scratch player and a bogey player on two holes. The first hole is 440 yards with many greenside bunkers. The scratch player's approach shot from 180 yards often misses the green, resulting in a bogey most of the time. The bogey golfer comes up short of the green in two but pitches up and often makes bogey as well. Although they both consider the hole to be difficult, they generally halve the hole.

The next hole is 350 yards and is perceived as easy. The scratch player has a very short iron shot to the green and would expect to make par at worst. The bogey player has a longer approach shot and frequently misses the green. The difference in ability is magnified on such a hole, as is the need for a handicap stroke.

Section 17 of the RCGA Handicap Manual outlines recommended procedures for determining the allocation of handi-

cap strokes for your golf course. These are strictly recommendations; good judgement and common sense are of prime importance because no formula can cover conditions on every golf course.

1. Collect about 200 hole-by-hole scores of a group of players (Group A) with Course Handicaps not exceeding eight for men and 14 for women. These scores should not be adjusted for Equitable Stroke Control. Average the score for each hole.

2. Collect about 200 hole-by-hole scores from a middle- to high-handicapped group of players (Group B). The average of the Course Handicaps for Group B should be 15 to 20 strokes higher than the average for players in Group A. These scores should not be adjusted for Equitable Stroke Control. Average the score for each hole.

3. Determine the difference in the average scores for each group on each hole and rank the holes, placing the hole with the highest average score difference first. The hole ranked number one is the hole on which the higher handicapped player most needs a stroke, and so on.

In addition, the RCGA recommends the following:

1. Equalize the distribution of handicap strokes over the entire 18 holes by assigning odd numbered strokes to holes on the first nine and even numbered strokes on the second nine, or vice versa if the second nine is decidedly more difficult than the first nine.

2. Avoid allocating low numbered strokes to holes near the end of each nine so that players receiving strokes will have the opportunity to use these strokes before either nine- or 18-hole matches are decided.

3. Lower numbered strokes should not be allocated to the first and second holes in the event that a hole by hole playoff is necessary.

For more information or to view a copy of the RCGA Handicap Manual visit [www.rcga.org](http://www.rcga.org).

## OnCourse

CLUB SUSSEX G&CC,  
SUSSEX, NEW BRUNSWICK  
HOST CANADIAN JUNIOR  
BOYS CHAMPIONSHIP  
DATE AUGUST 6-10

### YARDAGE / PAR

6,406 / 72

### ABOUT SUSSEX G&CC

Sussex Golf & Curling Club is located in Kings County, New Brunswick. Designed for golfers of all skill levels, the club is consistently touted as one of the top five courses in the province.

### THE COURSE

Sussex boasts wide, tree-lined fairways, several doglegs, two ponds, a brook and numerous bunkers. The greens are mainly flat with minute undulations. The uphill par-4 17th and 18th holes are considered by some to be the toughest finishing holes in the province.

### FUN FACT

Sussex, N.B. is home to the Atlantic Hot Air Balloon Fiesta.

