



*Club and Tournament
Handicapping
Reference Manual*

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References: Available on Croquet Australia website

- Croquet Australia Handicapping Regulations (Association Croquet)
- Croquet Australia Handicapping Regulations (Golf Croquet)
- Croquet Australia Handicapping Information Sheet
- AHS Handicap Card (for Association Croquet, Golf Croquet and Ricochet)

1. The Automatic Handicapping System (AHS)

1.1 What is the rationale of the system?

The system is designed to provide a method of assessing, on an ongoing basis, the standard of proficiency of people who play in recognised tournaments. This then enables realistic grouping of people of comparable standards, who can then compete against one another on an equal footing. In handicap games it enables people of differing abilities to be able to compete on an equal footing against each other. In other words, the aim is to ensure that two players in a handicap game have an equal chance of winning when they play each other.

In general, 10 competitive singles games over a six month period will be sufficient to allow handicaps to change automatically. If fewer games than this are played, or if for other sound reasons the automatic changes do not accurately reflect the players' standard, non-automatic changes may be made (see 1.4 and Section 4 below)

1.2 When should the card be used?

The results of games that are a part of a club, inter-club (including pennant or shield), interstate, national or international competitions are included on the handicapping card. In **Association Croquet (AC)** and **Ricochet (RC)** only singles games are recorded. In **Golf Croquet (GC)** both singles and doubles games are recorded. While cards may be used in social games, this is not a requirement, and is at the discretion of the individual club.

Possible repercussions of not using handicap cards when they should be used can be serious. Players from clubs not observing the Handicapping Regulations may be excluded from tournaments, and the club may not be able to hold Croquet Australia accredited tournaments.

1.3 When do handicaps change?

Under the Automatic System, if, after a **game** during a tournament (**not** at the end of the tournament, as stated on the old AC card, which are still used widely, or at the end of a multi-game match) a player is on or has passed a trigger point for a handicap different from their current one, their handicap will change.

1.4 When is it appropriate to make other handicap adjustments?

In some situations, the system may be unable to respond quickly enough to changes in a player's ability. For example, if they play very few tournaments or if their standard is changing markedly for various reasons. In these cases, Club and Tournament Handicappers are empowered to move them to a handicap so that they are able to compete effectively with other players who do play sufficient competitive singles games for the AHS to be effective. Such non-automatic changes take effect immediately. No approval is necessary, but the relevant Handicap Recorder should be notified.

1.5 Assigning handicaps for new/returning players

For AC a new (inexperienced) player's handicap should be assigned at the level at which they are best able to compete. Normally this would be at the maximum (i.e. 20) but it is permissible to give a higher handicap (e.g. 24 or 28) to allow for extra bisesques in early club social games. This handicap should be reduced to 20 (or lower) when the player enters a tournament.

For GC the initial handicap will be determined using the procedures outlined in the GC Rule 16 Australian Version found on the Croquet Australia website. (See Appendix C). The player stays at this level until their standard improves, when changes occur either through the AHS or as a result of action by the club or tournament Handicapper (see Section 4 below)

Players experienced in AC (i.e., with at least six months of AC play) have their GC handicaps allocated by completing the test referred to above and/or by reference to their AC handicap using the table in Appendix C.

For RC a new player without either AC or GC experience should have a handicap set based on the guidance contained in Appendix D. Club handicappers should continue to monitor such players and amend handicaps, as required, in accordance with the guidance. Players with AC and/or GC experience will be allocated a RC handicap based on the lower of their AC and/or GC handicaps as outlined in Appendix D. For these players, the initial index is the trigger point for the relevant handicap.

1.6 Assigning and Reviewing Handicaps for non-competition players

One of the most contentious issues is the reviewing of handicaps when the AHS system does not apply. While it is clear it should be done using the handicaps of other players as a benchmark, there is often uncertainty as to how this is best done.

As a general principle, the decision (as to whether a person has the appropriate handicap) should be based on actual evidence, rather than on an intuitive response. To assess this, it is most useful to ensure that the results of all (social) games are recorded. A suggested way of doing this is to have a book, to be completed after each game, indicating the names of the players; the type of game (i.e. singles/doubles, AC/GC/RC, whether bisques or free turns were involved, the length of the game and the results).

The handicapper can then review the results on a regular basis. (say three monthly). Bearing in mind the aim of the system is to ensure that each person has about a 50% chance of winning a game, it is evident that if a player is consistently winning or losing, then it is appropriate to vary their handicap. Otherwise, it is not.

2. Role and Responsibility of the Club Handicapper

- a) Assign a handicap to new players based on the level at which they are best able to compete.
- b) If a rapidly improving club member is about to enter a tournament, advise the tournament manager or handicapper that their handicap should be kept under review.
- c) Change players' handicaps in situations where the AHS is unable to respond quickly enough. For example, where the player plays very few competitive singles games or where the players' play improves or deteriorates so rapidly that the AHS cannot keep up. Advise the Handicap Recorder of such changes.
- d) In these situations, club handicappers, as well as tournament handicappers are empowered to change players' handicaps, using the handicaps of other players with similar skills as a benchmark.

- e) In doing this, handicappers must be guided by considering what handicap the player would need to be on to compete effectively (i.e. to win matches 50% of the time) with players on the AHS system.
- f) Carefully check and sign the AHS cards of players whose handicaps change automatically as a result of games played in long-running competitions (e.g. pennant).
- g) Review all AHS cards of club members on a regular basis (e.g. six monthly) to ensure the cards are correctly completed and accurately reflect the correct handicap.
- h) Issue a new card to club members when one is full, and record and certify accurately and clearly the carry over handicap and index points. (Enter this at inside top of new card).

3. The Role of the Tournament Manager and Tournament Handicapper

- a) The Tournament Manager or Tournament Handicapper should ensure the appropriate details are accurately entered on The AHS1 Form (Handicap Change Report Form) at the beginning and the end of any competitive event. Ideally the entries should be verified against the player's card.
- b) This form then should be sent to the Handicap Recorder within one week of the tournament finishing.
- c) The Tournament Handicapper is responsible for signing off the AHS cards of all players whose handicaps change during the event, When doing this they should check the calculations leading to the changes in handicap and ensure recent games have been properly entered on the card.
- d) During events the Tournament Handicapper has the discretion to make non-automatic changes to handicaps (effective immediately) if the AHS is unable to respond quickly enough to changes in a player's ability (e.g. the player has played very few competitive singles games or his/her play improves or deteriorates so rapidly that the AHS cannot keep up).

4. Maintaining the Handicap Card: Common Problems

4.1 Incorrect handicap

Players have passed a trigger point at the end of a tournament, but their handicap has not been adjusted and their new handicap was not recorded on the front of the card. This is, of course, primarily the responsibility of the Tournament Handicapper or Tournament Manager; a responsibility not exercised in a surprising number of cases. However, the Club Handicapper should pick up this error and make the necessary adjustment. That is why it is important to regularly review the cards of members, probably every six months.

4.2 Event and/or date not entered

The current card (available on the CA website) makes it easier to enter these details and thus be able to more clearly enter the date and event name. It is suggested that players leave a blank line between each tournament, so that each event can be more clearly seen and delineated.

4.3 Incorrect Additions/Subtractions

At the end of a game, when the index points are added or subtracted it is, of course, easy to make an error. However, errors suggest that players are not checking the calculations before signing the opponents' cards. The Club and Tournament handicapper should also check the additions and subtractions as part of their review. Otherwise, players (as well as their opponents) may well be at a disadvantage in terms of their index points. *(Dr Gunzberg discovered an error of 600 index points, which had been carried forward for many games).*

5. Common Questions/Misunderstandings

5.1 Maximum Handicap/Index

In AC, if a player's index would fall below 900 after a game, it is immediately reset to 900 and Handicap 20. No competition player ever returns to a handicap above 20.

In GC players whose handicap is -6 continue to gain index points and those on 20 can continue to lose index points.

In RC, the highest handicap for a competitive player is 14 and players on handicaps 13 or 14 do not lose index points. Players on handicaps 10 or 12 lose only half the index points, rounded down where applicable.

5.2 Dual Systems within Clubs

Some clubs utilise two handicap systems - the Automatic Handicapping System (AHS) and a separate internal club handicapping system for AC GC and RC.

While it is preferable that only one system be used, it is acceptable for clubs to have their own internal handicapping system for non-competition players - i.e. those people who only play in social games.

NOTE: It is **not permissible** for competition players* to have two separate handicaps - one for club use and one for external (competition) use.

Competition players should be handicapped on the basis of the AHS only and duplicate handicaps should not be used.

** "Competition Players" refers to players who compete in tournaments organised and run by Croquet Australia, State Associations Regions or Clubs. It includes significant internal club competitions such as club championships. Social events are excluded.*

5.3 Pennant Competitions

Handicapping Regulation for AC, (Regulation 5a) and the RCt Rules, Appendix 1 requires that players complete an entry on an official AHS card for each competitive singles game.

Similarly, Handicapping Regulations for GC (Regulation 2.1) requires that players complete an entry on an official AHS card for each competitive game.

There is no provision in any of the regulations to exclude games played under pennant conditions. To do so reduces the effectiveness of the Automatic Handicapping System and denies those who wish to improve their handicap the opportunity to do so.

5.4 Handicaps and Half Courts

Games played on courts significantly smaller than full-sized should use handicaps appropriate to those courts. Such handicaps will not necessarily be those used on full-sized courts. Games on these smaller courts are not eligible for inclusion in the Australian Automatic Handicapping System.

5.5 Handicaps and Time Limits

Neither the Croquet Australia Handicapping Regulation for AC nor GC specifies time limits. Hence there is no formal minimum length for a game to be included in the Croquet Australia Handicapping system.

Separately, however, for results to be included in the world rankings (either AC or GC) there are minimum time limits imposed by the maintainers of those ranking systems. In summary, they are 2 hours 15 minutes for AC, and 45 minutes for GC.

Full details on the requirements for results to be included in the world rankings can be found on the Croquet Australia website.

In RC competitive games may be:

- ¼ hours (for 14-point games)
- ½ hours (for 18-point games)
- 2+ hours (for 26-point games)

Appendix A When does a handicap change in Association Croquet and Ricochet?

The diagram below shows a small section of the range of handicaps in the Australian Handicap System (AHS). It shows the handicaps and the matching index, referred to as the trigger points, where handicaps may change.

Consider an example where someone is on a handicap of 12. It could be said that the index 1150 is that person's "personal" trigger point, and they have a personal range of indices from 1101 to 1199. That is the range of 12.

As they win or lose games their index will go up or down, and they may pass their "personal" trigger point, but their handicap will not change unless they go beyond their range, i.e. to 1200 or above or down to 1100 or below, where their handicap will change. They will then have a new "personal" trigger point with a new range of indices.

If, after a few wins, their index reached 1205 after a game their handicap would then be 11, with a new range of indices. If they then fell back to 1192, they would keep a handicap of 11 (not 12) because they are in a new handicap range (from 1150 to 1250).

So, it is possible for two players to have the same index, but with different handicaps. One player could be on a winning run up, while the other is on a losing run down.

Handicap	Trigger Point for this Handicap	Index Range for which there is no change for this handicap
10	1250	1201 - 1299
11	1200	1151 - 1249
12	1150	1101 - 1199
14	1100	1049 - 1149
16	1050	999 - 1099

NOTE: The highest handicap for competitive players in Ricochet is 14 and a player on a Handicap of 13 or 14 who loses a game does not lose index points and so cannot go below 1100.

Appendix B When does a handicap change in Golf Croquet?

The diagram below shows a small section of the range of handicaps for GC. It shows the handicaps and the matching index, referred to as the trigger points, where handicaps may change, and the range of index points for which there is no change for a particular handicap.

The same basic considerations apply for GC handicaps as for AC.

As an illustration, a player on handicap 9 who is successful and gains index points will become a handicap 8 at the end of the game which causes his or her index points to reach, or pass, 1300. Similarly, if he or she continues to be successful, their handicap will change to 7 when they reach or pass 1350 index points.

If, however, after reaching handicap 8, our player strikes a purple patch, losing many games, they must lose enough index points to pass 1250 before their handicap reverts to 9.

Handicaps	Trigger Points for this handicap	Range for which there is no change for this handicap
5	1500	1401 to 1599
6	1400	1351 to 1499
7	1350	1301 to 1399
8	1300	1251 to 1349
9	1250	1201 to 1299
10	1200	1151 to 1249
11	1150	1101 to 1199
12	1100	1051 to 1149

Appendix C Setting Initial Golf Croquet Handicaps

1. Setting initial handicaps for players new to croquet.

- 1.1 Players new to croquet may have their initial handicap set by starting from the fourth corner and counting the number of strokes to run hoops one to six inclusive. Players complete this exercise **three times** to the best of their ability and the total number of strokes is taken to obtain a grading score. This score is used to assess their handicap and index from the Table below. This will not be an accurate handicap as it measures only some of the skills and tactics needed. Players should play with this handicap initially and the automatic system will eventually obtain a correct value if they play in tournaments. Otherwise, the Club Handicapper will need to make adjustments (see 4 above).

Grading Score	Initial Index	Initial Handicap
50-54	1350	7
55-60	1300	8
61-64	1200	10
65-70	1100	12
71-78	1050	14
79+	1000	16

- 1.2 This will not be an accurate handicap as it measures only some of the skills and tactics needed. Players should play with this handicap initially and the automatic system will eventually obtain a correct value. Note that players should not start automatically on 16.

2. Setting initial Golf Croquet handicaps for players with an Association Croquet handicap

- 2.1 Players experienced in AC (i.e. with at least six months of AC play) may have their handicaps and initial index set from the following table.

Setting Initial GC Handicap by Reference to Association Croquet Handicap

AC Handicap	Initial GC Index	Initial GC Handicap
less than -1	2350	-3
-0.5 to -1	2100	-1
0 to 0.5	2000	0
1 to 1.5	1900	1
2 to 3	1800	2
3.5 to 5	1700	3
6 to 7	1600	4
8 to 9	1500	5

- 2.2 The **three times** round test described above may be used for players with higher AC handicaps.

Appendix D Guidelines for Setting Ricochet Handicaps

1. New Players with no Croquet Experience

Handicap 18 - Beginner learning how to play the game.

- Needs direct and consistent guidance about order of strokes and number of strokes after an event, ie –
- (a) roquet 2 continuation shots
- (b) 1 stroke after running hoop
- (c) that turn ends when striker's ball goes out in a continuation shot without roqueting a ball
- (d) status of balls during a turn - whether alive or dead

Handicap 16 - Social player

- Understands the basics of the game sequence of strokes – roquet, 2 continuation shots, hoops in order
- Needs guidance about fundamentals of the game
- Generally, knows whether balls are alive or dead and the significance of the difference
- Knows what constitutes end of turn
- Runs hoops from 1 to 2 yards **20%** of shots but has incidents where bombs a hoop repeatedly in a game
- Runs one hoop at a time and if successful attempts to join up with partner ball as has not placed forward ball.
- Uses bisques only to run hoops when hoop attempt bombs

Handicap 14 - Knows stroke sequence and only occasionally gets confused

- Knows fundamental rules about end of turn eg basic faults, ball leaving the court without roqueting.
- Knows to clear a dead ball when rush leaves balls near each other.
- Runs hoops from 1- 2 yds 40% of the time.
- Attempts hoops from > 2 yards with 10% success.
- Roquets balls at 5 yards to 7 yards 40%.
- Commonly prefers to separate opponent's balls and retreats to partner ball rather than set up breaks of more than one hoop.
- In social play still requires guidance about rules.

Handicap 12 - Break of 2 hoops once per game.

- Learning ball control – positioning of continuation ball to (i) roquet, (ii) set ball up in reasonable hoop running position.
- Keen to master basic tactics and skills as evidenced by engagement with experienced partner during games and practicing before and after games.
- Runs hoops from 1 to 2 yards 50% of the time and attempts longer hoop shots with 20% success rate.
- 50% success rate roqueting balls 5 to 7 yards.
- Able to play independently as has sound knowledge of the rules

Handicap 10 - Makes 2 hoop breaks at least twice per game.

- More consistent with ball positioning to ensure roquets, more accurate (50% of the time) rushing balls to good position.
- Roquets 60% of attempts up to 7 yards.
- Gaining confidence with hoop running (1-2 yards 60%)
- Understands the tactics
- learning to use bisques strategically (ie setting up continuation of the turn by positioning the striker's ball near the ball that gives the best potential to set up the lawn for at least a 2 hoop break).

Handicaps 9 – 8 - Makes 2 hoop breaks at least twice per game.

- Tries to use more than the striker's ball and partner ball to establish 2 hoop breaks.
- Roquets up to 7 yards 70% of attempts and between 10 yards and 14 yards 20%.

Handicaps 7 - 5 - Makes 3 hoop breaks at least once per game.

- Regularly creating breaks by positioning pioneer, forward, pivot and escape balls, and consistently uses 3 to 4 balls for breaks.
- Runs 2-yard hoops 70% and between 2 and 4 yards 40% of the time.

Handicaps 4 - 3 - Has confident ball control

- Plays accurate rushes, cut rushes and ricochets.
- Good command of tactics, keeping balls inside the square to ensure breaks built and maintained.
- Often makes breaks of 4 or more hoops in a game.
- Aspires to peg out in 2-hour games.

Handicaps less than 3 - Makes breaks of 5 hoops or more several times in a game.

- Regularly pegs out in 2-hour games.
- Consistently sets up 4 ball breaks to establish multiple hoop breaks.
- Players on this handicap and better will generally achieve this handicap via the AHS.
- At this stage there are too few players with handicaps at this level to detail skills and strategy consistently applied

2. Existing Association Croquet and Golf Croquet Players

Association or Golf Croquet Handicap	Ricochet Handicap	Examples
-3 to -2	-1	GC Handicap 4 = 6 in Ricochet AC Handicap 7 = 10 in Ricochet
-1 to 0	0	
1 to 5	Add 2	
6+	Add 3	

- NOTE:**
1. For AC handicaps round upwards as necessary
 2. Where a player has an AC and GC handicap use the lower handicap to calculate the RC handicap.