

# **Surbiton Croquet Club**

## **Handicaps**

We croquet players are lucky: croquet has one of the very best handicapping systems of any sport. It enables us to have games between players of quite different abilities, still having a good competitive game that either side could win. It doesn't quite cope with an absolute beginner playing a world champion, but instances of top players being beaten by relative newcomers are common.

In working out the handicap position for a game you can use various tables on the Croquet England web site, or copies printed off on the club notice board near the TV, to look it up, or use an online calculator, [chc.eu.pythonanywhere.com](http://chc.eu.pythonanywhere.com). The calculator will give you the correct handicap position for various lengths of game, various lawn sizes, both singles and doubles, and covers AC, GC, One-ball and short croquet. If you type the address into the browser on your phone you can then save the calculator on your home screen (it works for both Android phone and iPhone).

## **GC**

The current system of GC handicapping is called Advantage GC. Instead of starting the game at 0;0, the tables or calculator will give you a different one, say, -1;2. There are several gadgets you can carry to keep track of the score (including pegs for the hoops), but announcing it loudly after each hoop works well! Other than the score, the game proceeds as usual. Sometimes, even the golden hoop will not allow one or other player (or side) to reach the winning score (normally seven), so a thirteen-point game will use the normal 12 hoops and then hoops 3, 4 and 1 as needed. Note: Advantage GC is a fairly new system and the starting positions are being adjusted with experience. There is a revised set of tables for 2025.

## **AC**

AC uses a different system. The weaker player gets a number of bisques (extra turns). They can be used at the end of a turn to continue the turn using the same ball – but all balls are available to roquet again. If you have a half-bisque this can be used in the same way, but cannot score a hoop – you can, however, use a half-bisque and follow it with a full bisque if you wish, so you can then run hoops. Bisques help you set up a break or keep a break going. You can use several bisques in succession to keep a break going over many hoops.

## **Getting a handicap**

The club handicappers can give you an initial handicap or review your handicap once you have one.

For new players, an approximate GC handicap can be calculated by starting from corner 4, as usual, and counting the number of strokes it takes to run hoops 1-6 and then repeating this twice more so you have run 18 hoops. If the total number of strokes is less than 50 you will need to be assessed by a club handicapper. Otherwise, look up the number of strokes in the table on the club notice board by the TV. This will give you a handicap of between 7 and 16. After you have played, say, five or ten matches, have your card reviewed by a club handicapper.

Unfortunately, there is no equivalent easy system for AC. You will have to be watched by a club handicapper. For new players, the assessment is based on how many bisques it takes to do an all-round (12 hoop) break from a reasonable starting position.

### **Maintaining your handicap record.**

There are two handicap cards – green for GC and white for AC, both available in the clubhouse.

There are columns on each for: Date, Opponent Name and Handicap, Game H/L and Score, and Index +/- and New. If you are playing a handicap game, you fill in the date and the name of your opponent plus their handicap. You would enter H for a handicap game and then the score (for you). So, if you won by 3 enter +3. The index change will be +10 and you add that to your running index. For level games, 'L', you look up the two handicaps in the points exchange table and enter that figure in the +/- column. If you beat a better player, you get a higher change in your index – if you are beaten by a better player the index change is lower.

Casual games do not affect your index. Only matches in competitions, or in our roll-ups that are scored over the season, count. Only singles matches can affect your index.

Your handicap changes when your index reaches a 'trigger point'. For example, if you are a 14 at GC and your index becomes 1105 after a win, your handicap changes to 12. It is important to note that if you then lose a match and drop below 1100 you do not go back to a 14, that would only happen if your index fell to 1050. The handicap change levels are trigger points not thresholds.

If you are playing in a tournament and go through a trigger point there is no change until the end of the day (or weekend etc); the change happens then, provided that your index has not gone back again.

It is good practice to have your handicap card available for view when playing in a tournament.

It is important to remember that no handicap system is perfect and all players have good and bad days on the courts. Just because you or your opponent has won (or lost) several games in a row does not automatically mean that your handicap (or your opponents) is wrong. However, if you do think a handicap is incorrect, then please do not hesitate to ask a club handicapper for a re-assessment.