

The Match Ladder

Scratch format — gross match play, no handicap strokes

Basic Rules · Draft v1

The Ladder is an ongoing competition. Every member holds a rung. You climb by challenging the players above you and beating them head-to-head. It runs on its own — you arrange your own matches whenever it suits you both.

1 The Ladder

Every participating member occupies a numbered rung, from **1 at the top** down to the last rung. Your goal is simple: be as high on the ladder as you can — and hold your rung when the challenges come.

2 Issuing a Challenge

- You may challenge any player ranked **up to three rungs above you** (e.g. #8 may challenge #7, #6 or #5, but not #4).
- Challenges only go *upward* — you cannot challenge someone below you.
- You may have **one open challenge at a time**. Settle it before issuing another.
- After a match, those two players cannot re-challenge *each other* until each has played someone else — no instant rematches.

3 Accepting & Scheduling

A challenged player **must accept** — you can't decline. The job of finding a time falls on the *defender*: within **3 days**, offer the challenger at least **two or three reasonable options** on different days.

- Play the match within **14 days** of the challenge.
- **"Reasonable" means a genuine chance to play** — not a single dawn weekday slot. Ignore the challenge or offer no workable times, and the **challenger wins by forfeit**.
- If the **challenger** turns down fair offers or backs out, the challenge is **void and counts as a loss**.

- **Genuine deadlock** — both offered times in good faith but nothing lines up (travel, illness)? The challenge is **cancelled with no change and no penalty**, and may be re-issued later. Ask the committee if you need a ruling.

4 The Match

- **18-hole match play** is standard. A **9-hole** match is allowed if both players agree in advance.
- Played under the **USGA Rules of Golf** and the local rules of the course you play.
- Hole-by-hole: low score wins the hole; tied holes are halved. Win the match by being more holes up than there are holes left to play.
- This is the **scratch** ladder — **no handicap strokes are given**. Lowest gross score on each hole wins it, straight up.

5 Result & Moving the Ladder

OUTCOME	WHAT HAPPENS
Challenger wins	The two players swap rungs . The challenger moves up.
Higher player wins	No change . Position successfully defended.
Challenger loses	Must play (and win) against a different opponent before challenging that same player again.

6 Ties

If the match is all-square after the agreed holes, **the tie goes to the higher-ranked player** — the defender keeps the rung. To move up, the challenger has to win outright.

7 No-Shows on Match Day

- Once a time is agreed, a player who fails to show **forfeits the match** — the result stands as if they had lost (challenger takes the rung; or the defender keeps it).
- A pattern of no-shows may be marked **Inactive** by the committee until that player is ready to play.

8 Going Away (Inactive Status)

Traveling, injured, or just need a break? Tell the committee and you'll be marked **Inactive**. While inactive you hold your rung but **cannot be challenged** — and you can't issue challenges either. You return at the same position.

9 Pace & Conduct

Keep up a reasonable pace, call your own breaches honestly, and remember this is meant to be fun, friendly, and competitive — in that order.

10 Recognition

- The ladder is perpetual — it doesn't reset. From time to time (say, at year's end) we may recognize whoever holds **#1**.
- We may likewise recognize the **"Most Climbed"** player — biggest jump from their starting rung — to reward the chasers, not just the front-runners.

11 Disputes

Any question the two players can't settle goes to the **Ladder Committee**, whose decision is final.

★ How the Ladder Is Seeded

To start fair and objective, the opening ladder is ordered by each member's **current USGA Handicap Index, lowest index at the top**. It's a transparent starting point that needs no extra qualifying rounds. Because this is the scratch ladder, that ordering is just the starting line — from day one, anyone can climb past anyone by winning matches.

(If members prefer, the committee can instead seed by a single gross stroke-play qualifying round, or by random draw.)