

Q: How often you should beat your handicap?

A: You should average about three shots higher than your handicap. For example, a player with a Course Handicap of 16 on a course with a USGA Course Rating of 71.2 should average about 90, not 87. The USGA Handicap System is based on 96 percent of the best 10 differentials (corrected for Course and Slope Rating) of his last 20 rounds. More than half of your scores should be within three strokes of three over your handicap (87 to 93 in our example). Most golfers will beat their handicap (87 or better in our example) 20 per cent of the time and beat it by three strokes one out of every 20 rounds. For this player to break 80 (beat his handicap by eight), the odds are 1,138 to 1 that his handicap is correct. Do that twice and it would take the average golfer to play over 700 years of golf to accomplish it "fairly". In other words, odds far beyond reasonableness. .

By Dean Knuth, Golf Digest Professional Advisor. Former senior director of the USGA handicap department, Knuth invented today's USGA Course Rating and Slope system. EditRegion1