



Commonly Asked Questions About *The Equalizer*® Handicapping System

These are some of the most commonly asked questions about handicaps. Please also read [How Your Handicap Is Calculated](#) document to learn more about *The Equalizer*® Handicapping System.

I don't understand *The Equalizer*®, APA's handicap and scoring system. How does it work?

The APA created *The Equalizer*® system in order to allow players of various abilities to compete equally. This system and its formula are considered proprietary and therefore your League Operator is limited to the information they can share with you. That having been said, it is important to understand that good scorekeeping during weekly League play is vital to the accuracy of not only your skill level, but the skill level of your opponent. This includes, but is not limited to, the proper marking of innings, defensive shots, out-of-turn incompletes, early losses, 8 Break-And-Runs, 8 On-The-Breaks, and proper games won counts. Following each week of play, your League Operator conducts a review of each player in each division to ensure that all players are participating at the correct skill level.

How often are skill levels updated?

Skill levels are updated each week after the processing and entering of scoresheets.

What does moving up in skill level really mean?

Moving up in skill level essentially means that you are playing better pool. The APA has developed *The Equalizer*® system over the last 30 years to make fair play available to players with different levels of skill. This is one of the cornerstones of our League. Moving up in skill level is one of the most exciting and rewarding elements of playing in the APA!

I lost my match but my skill level went up! How does that happen?

Your handicap is based on your performance in each match you play. Your score is calculated from the previous information recorded on your weekly scoresheet. In a very close match where each player plays very well, it is possible for you to lose the match but still receive a good score for the week. This score, if it is among your best, could possibly raise your handicap even though you lost.

How many matches do I have to lose before I go down in skill level?

There are many factors involved in determining handicap movement, up or down. Losing a match, which usually results in a poor score, probably won't lower your skill level because handicaps are calculated by counting your best scores first. In a very close match where each player plays very well, it is possible for you to lose the match but still receive a good score for the week. This score, if it is among your best, could possibly raise your handicap even though you lost.

Why did my League Operator raise my skill level?

Your skill level went up based on your performance during weekly play. Every week that you play, you earn a score that is applied to your APA League record. The more you play and continue to practice, the better you become. You should view your raise in skill level as an accomplishment - a sign of improvement!

The system doesn't work! My SL6 got beat by a SL3 (John Doe) that should be at least a SL4 or SL5!

There could be a couple of explanations for this:

John Doe could be a relatively new player. The APA has determined that a player's skill level is not considered established until they have obtained 10 APA League scores. This means that there is the possibility for fluctuations until that 10th match is achieved.

John Doe may be a well-established player with 50+ matches and may be having a "career" evening. You have probably experienced this from time to time. Some nights we just can't miss or the table is extremely kind. This can make a player look far better than he/she actually is and can happen to any player, of any skill level, on any given night, in any part of the country! Consistency plays a role in determining a player's skill level.

How can I be a SL4 in one league and a SL5 in another?

This is not unusual under certain circumstances. You are obviously a player that is improving - from that of a strong SL4 to a beginner SL5. The more you play and the more data each League area accumulates, the more likely that the data from both areas will place you in the same skill level range.

I play on two different nights in the same League area. I was a SL5 on Monday and a SL4 on Thursday. How can that be?

Based on when you play and when your scoresheets are processed, this can happen from time to time. Skill levels for each division are updated automatically by our computer system every time a new scoresheet is printed for that division. When scoresheets are processed and printed midweek, this can be the result for players that are on the verge of changing skill levels and play on multiple nights on different teams.

A brand-new player just joined the APA and played on match. After his first match, I received my scoresheet, and the League Operator raised him to a SL6!

It is common and, in most cases, expected that a new player's skill level will fluctuate until he/she has an established skill level (generally 10 scores). This movement is not necessarily based on the League Operators opinion but rather *The Equalizer*® Handicapping System. The APA Official Team Manual states as a new player you will have more of a "dramatic movement" in skill level until you have an established skill level (about 10 score). Like any handicapping system, the skill level becomes more accurate as more scores are added.

I just wen up to a SL4. There is no way I am a SL4! I am not nearly as good as Jane who is a SL4 in my division! She would win if we were to play!

There is certainly a difference between a player that just moved up to a SL4 and someone who has been a SL4 for quite some time. There is a range of skill for each level of play. Players that have just moved up in skill level will have to play their best to defeat a player that has been at that skill level for quite some time.

Some of my teammates went up in skill level, and now my team can't stay under the 23-Rule. Is the 23-Rule just designed to make me split up my team of friends so that League Operator can have more teams and make more money?

The last thing your League Operator wants is for players to be upset over skill levels. In order to be fair to all members, your League Operator must allow **The Equalizer®** handicap and scoring system to give appropriate skill levels to all players. The skill levels of your teammates inevitably improve because they are playing more competitive pool each week. There are some solutions to help your team avoid 23-Rule issues during a session. One such solution is to try to organize a team with a lot of flexibility, meaning that you will need to build a team around players with many different levels of ability.

What is a "defensive shot" and how does it affect my skill level?

A defensive shot is a shot where there is no intent by a player to pocket a ball of the player's category. The marking of defensive shots equally affects your skill level, as does the overall scorekeeping process. Proper scorekeeping is vital to the accuracy of skill levels.

Why is it so important for us to mark defensive shots?

Teams that fail to consistently mark their own defensive shots will immediately be very obvious to your League Operator. As a result, that team will be more heavily scrutinized when it comes to skill levels than other teams that consistently mark defensive shots on a weekly basis. So, the best solution is to accurately mark them on your scoresheet. This will help to ensure that your League area is accurately ranked. The proper marking of defensive shots is the most important safeguard against handicap manipulation.