

## General Principles for Course Selection

Courses should ideally be selected to challenge players based on their current skill level and even one step up in higher tier events. Skill level ranges are defined using PDGA Player Ratings as follows: Gold 970+, Blue 925+, White 875+, Red 825+, Green under 825. The [Divisions, Ratings and Points Factors](#) table indicates the primary color rating range for each division.

In high level Pro events, the Gold level criteria should be the primary set of guidelines for the course skill level used for Open & Masters 40+ and Blue level for Pro Women (when possible). At high level Am events, the Blue level criteria should be the primary design level for top level Advanced & Advanced Masters 40+ at these events.

For many courses, it will not be necessary to have alternate course configurations for each division group indicated below except sometimes for the very oldest and youngest groups. These exceptions are a course with several holes: (a) requiring significant power to throw across water or valleys, (b) long throws to forced doglegs or, (c) long throws through nasty terrain to reach a decent landing area. These holes are candidates for alternate tee or pin placements appropriate for some division groups.

If the guidelines indicate you should have at least one hole with a different setup, then plan for at least 4-6 different holes for a lower skill group of divisions. This is enough different holes to put these divisions on alert to check that they are playing the right setup on each hole versus different hole setups on just 1 or 2 holes that could easily be missed by some playing groups.

## Hole Design Criteria

The tables below provide a quick reference for Tournament Directors and their assistants who select or set up courses for events to get a feel for what skill level(s) a course and certain holes within them are more suitable. This information can also be helpful for setting up temporary holes and holes for Closest-To-Pin (CTP) challenges. However, this document doesn't show how to design holes well, just how to get the lengths in the appropriate range for different player skill levels. For more information on design, start with the documents on the [PDGA Course Development](#) page and seek professional design guidance.

The elements covered for each color skill level are Effective Hole Length, Course Length Range, Approach Length Range, Water Crossings and Dogleg Length Range. In addition, guidelines for Signs & Tee Pads are provided to confirm that your permanent courses either have them or need to be provided for your event, especially temporary courses.

## Par

For sanctioned events, TDs must assign par to each hole so the proper penalty can be applied if a player is late to start their round. Refer to PDGA [Par Guidelines](#) for assistance assigning values for different skill levels depending on foliage density of each hole. Courses will typically have pars marked on tee signs. However, for tournaments, check to make sure these values match the pars specified by the TD for the highest skilled players throwing this course.

## Effective Hole Length

Effective Length is a hole's measured length (by laser, wheel, tape, GPS or pacing) plus or minus the elevation adjustment. The approximate length adjustment for elevation change from tee to basket is calculated by taking the elevation change, multiplying it by 3, then adding to or subtracting from the hole's measured length. Add for upslopes, subtract for downslopes. For example, if a 300 ft hole measured by laser from tee to pin goes uphill 10 feet, multiply 10 ft x 3 (= 30 feet), add this to 300 to end up with a hole with an effective length roughly equivalent to a 330 ft hole on flat ground. In cases where the slope is greater than 10% up or down, the multiplier is likely greater than 3. Only testing and experience can provide a good estimate for the effective length. For more detail, refer to the [PDGA Par Guidelines](#) chart.

		GOLD	BLUE	WHITE	RED	GREEN
PAR 3	Feet	250+	200+	160+	140+	100+
	Meters	76+	60+	48+	42+	30+
PAR 4	Feet	625+	525+	450+	375+	325+
	Meters	190+	160+	138+	114+	100+
PAR 5	Feet	1000+	800+	675+	550+	475+
	Meters	304+	244+	206+	168+	144+

## Course Length Range

The following course lengths for 18 holes are typical for each skill level. A Gold level course should be challenging enough to have a Scratch Scoring Average of at least 50 and greater than 54 would be preferred.

RANGE	GOLD	BLUE	WHITE	RED	GREEN
Feet	7000 – 11,000	5000 – 8500	4500 – 7500	3500 – 5500	2500 – 4000
Meters	2130 - 3350	1520 - 2590	1370 - 2290	1070 - 1680	760 - 1220

## Approach Length Range

Course designers create holes to be reached in one, two or three good throws. Although an approach throw is usually the last throw intended to reach the target, it can be designed as the first or second throw in a par 4 or 5 as a change of pace or when doglegs and water are involved (see below). The lengths in this table indicate how far a player in that skill range can be expected to throw with a mid-range disc or fairway driver in OPEN terrain or CONSTRAINED such as woods or hazards. The max length in parentheses should be used sparingly for when the designer requires the player to throw a hi-speed driver for their approach.

OPEN (Max)	GOLD	BLUE	WHITE	RED	GREEN
Feet	180 – 290 (320)	140 – 240 (275)	110 – 180 (230)	90 – 140 (185)	70 – 100 (135)
Meters	54 – 88 (98)	42 – 74 (84)	34 – 56 (70)	28 – 44 (56)	22 – 30 (42)
<b>CONSTRAINED</b>					
Feet	125 – 225	100 – 180	80 – 135	65 – 120	50 – 75
Meters	38 - 70	30 - 56	24 - 42	20 - 38	16 - 24

## Water Crossing Length Range

Provide players a route to throw around water hazards if possible. However, **if the terrain forces a throw across water**, provide a drop zone on the target side where players may proceed by rule without throwing across. Here's the maximum length across water for each skill level **when forced** to reach the other side.

CROSS WATER MAXIMUM	GOLD	BLUE	WHITE	RED	GREEN
Feet	265	230	***	***	***
Meters	82	70	***	***	***

\*\*\* Do not have a forced water crossing. Provide a tee on the target side of the water hazard, a wide route around it or a drop zone on the target side where the player may proceed by rule.

## Doglegs Length Range

A player in each of these skill levels should not be required to throw farther than shown to reach the corner of a sharper dogleg when a shorter throw will not allow the player to make it around the corner to reach the basket (or next landing area) with a good next throw. (*effective length*)

<b>DOGLEG</b>					
<b>MAXIMUM</b>	<b>GOLD</b>	<b>BLUE</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>RED</b>	<b>GREEN</b>
<b>Feet</b>	295	260	200	160	100
<b>Meters</b>	90	80	60	48	30

## Signs & Tee Pads

At minimum, the hole number and length(s) should be indicated either on a sign or painted on the tee pad, board or marking stone. On wooded courses and blind holes, show the flight path(s). If the hole has multiple pin placements, their locations should be indicated on the sign. If all placements are blind on a hole, recommend using a magnet, peg or pointer system to indicate on the sign where the pin is located that round. Make sure there are appropriate signs at all tees being used. A week prior to tournament time, it can be helpful to paint arrows on the ground directing players to the next tee, especially on courses with temporary tees or routing for an event with many out-of-town players expected.

Ideally, tee pads should all be the same type (i.e., grass/dirt or hard surface). Refer to [PDGA Course Design Guidelines](#) document for more details on signs and tee pads.