

What is Age-Graded Scoring?

Basically, Age-Graded Scoring allows all individuals within a race to be "scored" against each other. That is done by first comparing the individual's finish time at that particular race distance to an "ideal" or best time (not necessarily the "world record") achievable for that individual's age and gender.

Age-Graded Scoring utilizes statistical tables to compare the performances of individual athletes at different distances, between different events, or against other athletes of either gender and/or of any age. The Age-Graded Scoring calculator used for the "NAME YET TO BE DETERMINED" Racing Series can be found at <http://www.howardgrubb.co.uk/athletics/wmalookup06.html>

Confusing? Perhaps looking at how Age-Graded Scoring applies to road racing may help clear things up.

How does Age-Graded Scoring work?

Let's say a 55-year old male runs a marathon in 3:00:27. He would receive an Age-Graded Score of 80.21%. That is because, according to the Age-Graded Scoring tables, the "ideal" finish time for a 55-year old male is 2:24:22, and that's about 20% faster (about 36 minutes) than our 55-year old ran.

Now let's say that a 27-year old male ran the same marathon in 2:45:47. Obviously, that is faster than our 55-year old. But is the performance of the younger runner really "better" when compared with that of a man more than twice his age? The answer is, "No!" In fact, the Age-Graded score of the 25-year old is only 76.51%. The old guy wins! And, our 27-year old has a lot of training to do if he expects to "improve with age" and post anything close to a 3-hour marathon when he turns fifty-five!

Why Age-Graded Scoring?

Age-Graded Scoring was originally developed to do two things:

1. Provide each race finisher with a percentage value score that will enable them to judge their performance against any and all others without bias to age or sex. So, no matter how old you get, your Age-Graded Score or "performance percentage" will be judged against the standard for your current age within your gender. And as your performances decline with advancing age (and they will), so too will the standards used to calculate your Age-Graded Score, thereby giving you a true measure of your performance. Who knows, although your actual finish times may get slower over the years, you could actually improve in Age-Graded score like a fine wine.
2. Correct each person's performance, no matter what age, to what it would have been (or will be) in their "prime" athletic years. This allows for very interesting comparisons. You can compare your current performance to previous ones over the same or any distance. You can compare your performance to other runners of any age and either gender. You can even compare your performance to the elite athletes.

Where did Age-Graded Scoring come from?

The research and statistical analysis that allows us to determine these percentages was developed by the World Association of Veteran Athletes (WAVA), the world governing body for masters long distance running, racewalking, and track and field. WAVA compiled approximate world record level performance standards for both genders and each age between 5 and 100. Then separate sets of standards were established for each of the standard road racing distances (5K, 8K, 10K, 12K, Half Marathon, Marathon, etc.).

Age-Graded Scoring Achievement Levels

WAVA has also developed the following broad "Achievement Levels" for use with Age-Graded Scoring. A score within each range indicates the level of performance achieved by an athlete.

- 100% = Approximate World Record Level
- 90-99% = World Class
- 80-89% = National Class
- 70-79% = Regional Class
- 60-69% = Local Class

Why haven't I heard of Age-Graded Scoring before now?

Although few US race directors currently employ Age-Graded Scoring, it is an interesting and very useful piece of information for many runners. There are many overseas events that do use these standards to score their races and some even distribute awards appropriate for the level of achievement.

And it may be that Age-Graded Scoring will gain in popularity in the US as the number of older runners continues to increase.