



Special Olympics

SNOWSHOEING COACHING GUIDE

Snowshoeing Rules, Protocol & Etiquette



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Teaching the Rules of Snowshoeing

The best time to teach the rules of snowshoeing is during practice. Please refer to the official *Special Olympics Sports Rules* for the complete listing of snowshoeing rules. As coach, it is your responsibility to know and understand the rules of the game. It is equally important to teach your athletes the rules and to make them play within the spirit of the game. Below are selected laws of the sport of snowshoeing. Maintain current copies of the official *Special Olympics Sports Rules* and your national and/or international federation snowshoeing rulebooks. Know the differences and carry these rulebooks to every game.

Divisioning

It is important that you as a coach learn and understand the rules and procedures of divisioning before attending competitions. Understanding the divisioning process will have a direct impact on your athletes' performance. The fundamental difference between Special Olympics competitions and those of other sports organizations is that athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate, and every athlete is recognized for his/her performance. Competitions are structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar ability in equitable divisions. Historically, Special Olympics has suggested that all divisions be created so that the variance between the highest and lowest scores within that division does not differ by more than 10 percent. This 10 percent statement is not a rule but should be used as a guideline for establishing equitable divisions when the number of athletes competing is appropriate.

Coaches are critical in helping competition management teams make divisioning work. Divisioning works best when coaches submit preliminary scores. This helps athletes get into the proper division as well as gain additional competition experience.

How Divisioning is Implemented

An athlete's ability is the primary factor in divisioning Special Olympics competitions. The ability of an athlete or team is determined by an entry score from a prior competition or the result of a seeding round or preliminary event at the competition itself. Other factors that are significant in establishing competitive divisions are age and sex.

Ideally, competition is enhanced when each division accommodates three to eight competitors or teams of similar ability. In some cases, the number of athletes or teams within a competition will be insufficient to achieve this goal. The following describes the sequential process for creating equitable divisions.

Unified Sports® Rules

There are few differences in the rules for Special Olympics Unified Sports® competition as the rules are stipulated in the official *Special Olympics Sports Rules* and modifications are outlined in the rules book. The additions are highlighted below.

1. A roster consists of a proportionate numbers of athletes and partners.
2. For snowshoeing, a Unified Sports team consists of two athletes and two partners of equal ability competing in the 4 x 100 and the 4 x 400 relay events.

Protest Procedures

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition and may change from competition to competition. Only rules violations can be protested. Judgment calls made by officials or divisioning decisions cannot be protested. The protest must site specific violations from the rulebook and a clear definition of why the coach feels the rule was not followed.

The role of the competition management team is to enforce the rules. As a coach, your duty to your athletes and team is to protest any action or events while your athletes are competing that you think violated the Official Snowshoeing Rules. It is extremely important that you do not make protests because you and your athlete did not get your desired outcome of an event. Filing a protest is a serious matter that can impact a competition's schedule. Check with the competition team prior to a competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition.



Snowshoeing Protocol and Etiquette

Courtesy and Safety While Snowshoeing

- ♦ Do not snowshoe too close to other athletes.
- ♦ Be careful not to step on the tail of another athlete's snowshoes.
- ♦ Get out of the way as quickly as possible if there is a fall.
- ♦ Do not cross in front of other moving athletes.
- ♦ Remember that the faster snowshoer has the responsibility to warn another snowshoer or skier when overtaking him or her.
- ♦ Fill up holes in the snow after falling.
- ♦ Give way to beginners.
- ♦ Do not hit others with equipment.
- ♦ Follow the rules of the facility that you are using; for example, stay off of trails not designated for snowshoeing.
- ♦ Remain on marked trails.
- ♦ Wear appropriate clothing.
- ♦ Always snowshoe with someone else.
- ♦ Do not wear snowshoes outside of the designated areas.
- ♦ When not using snowshoes, leave them in an appropriate area.

Rules of the Trails (If Using Trails)

1. Snowshoe in a controlled manner.
2. Proceed carefully when passing another snowshoer or skier.
3. Let the person in front know which side (left/right) when passing.
4. Yield the right of way when entering from a side trail.
5. Since snowshoes are easier to control and maneuver than skis or snowmobiles, it is suggested that snowshoers yield the right of way to all other trail users where trails are narrow.
6. Do not stop in a narrow place on the trail.
7. Do not block the trail when stopped.
8. Do not stop abruptly, especially in spots not visible to oncoming athletes.
9. Look before starting again; do not move out in front of others.

Signs

Since there are few snowshoeing-specific trails, and training and competition may take place at cross-country ski trails, teach the athletes the meaning of those signs.

Trail Markers

A standard marker for cross-country ski trails is the azure blue diamond. All ski area associations and most government agencies have adopted it. Some trails also are marked with numbers, symbols, letters and color-coded signs. For example, the trail difficulty signs include Green Circle for easiest trails, Blue Square for intermediate trails and Black Diamond for most difficult trails.

Relative Degree of Difficulty

Found on the trail board and trail map and at every trailhead, are signs that designate the degree of difficulty of a trail in the system. An example of ski area degree-of-difficulty signs is given above.



Cross Country Skier and Snowshoer

This sign is used to designate a trail as dedicated to either cross-country skiers or snowshoers. It is used at the trailhead, on the trails, at trail junctions and on printed information. Most trail systems will not indicate if they are dedicated to skiers or snowshoers.

Caution or Warning

These signs have both permanent and temporary use. The “Caution!” sign can be used temporarily to mark a spring washout or permanently to mark a steep downhill or busy intersection. The other warning signs are self-explanatory. Warning signs should be posted on the trail board, at the trailhead and, as required, on the trail.

Regulatory

The signs below are used to regulate the use of a trail. The “Trail Closed” sign should be used on the trail board and, when feasible, at the trailhead. Other regulatory signs, particularly the full season signs, such as “No Dogs” or “Dog Trail,” should be used on the trail board and map and at the trailhead. A ski area also may use rope or tape across the entrance of the trail or at a trail junction to signify that the trail is not to be used.



Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is both the coaches' and the athletes' commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes. Lead by example.

Competitive Effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.
- Always finish a race or event: Never quit.

Fair Play at All Times

- Always comply with the rules.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- Respect the decision of the officials at all times.

Expectations of Coaches

1. Always set a good example for participants and fans to follow.
2. Instruct participants in proper sportsmanship responsibilities, and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics the top priorities.
3. Respect judgment of contest officials, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
4. Treat opposing coaches, directors, participants and fans with respect.
5. Shake hands with officials and the opposing coach in public.
6. Develop and enforce penalties for participants who do not abide by sportsmanship standards.

Expectations of Athletes & Partners in Special Olympics Unified Sports®

1. Treat teammates with respect.
2. Encourage teammates when they make a mistake.
3. Treat opponents with respect: Shake hands prior to and after contests.
4. Respect judgment of contest officials, abide by rules of the contest and display no behavior that could incite fans.
5. Cooperate with officials, coaches or directors and fellow participants to conduct a fair contest.
6. Do not retaliate (verbally or physically) if the other team demonstrates poor behavior.
7. Accept seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing Special Olympics.
8. Define winning as doing your personal best.
9. Live up to the high standard of sportsmanship established by your coach.

Coaching Tips

- Discuss snowshoeing competition protocol such as congratulating opponent after all events, win or lose; and controlling temper and behavior at all times.
- Give recognition to athletes and assistant coaches.
- Always commend the athletes when they demonstrate sportsmanship.



Remember

- ◆ Sportsmanship is an attitude that is shown in how you and your athletes behave on the course or trail.
- ◆ Be positive about competing.
- ◆ Respect your opponents and yourself.
- ◆ Always stay under control even if you are feeling mad or angry.



Snowshoeing Glossary

Term	Definition
Binding	The part of a snowshoe that attaches the footwear to the snowshoe.
Carrying Surface	Surface area of a snowshoe; the larger the surface area, the more flotation and support for the snowshoer.
Crampon	The sharp pointed traction device that may be attached to a snowshoe's pivot hinge to prevent slippage. Generally made from heat-treated aluminum or tempered carbon steel.
Claw	Like a crampon but with comparatively short serrations. Claws are an angle traction device attached to snowshoes. They give a "grip" comparable to that provided by the webbing of traditional snowshoes and are used in conditions where ice or steep surfaces are not encountered.
Decking	Solid or webbed pieces of nylon, rawhide or rubber-like material attached to the snowshoe frame that provides flotation for the snowshoer.
Fall Line	Shortest distance down a slope. The direction perpendicular to the ground that an object (you, rock, snow) would fall.
Flotation	Ability of a snowshoe to limit sinking down into soft or deep snow.
Frame	The rigid outer structural component of a snowshoe, usually made of wood, plastic or metal.
Heel Strap	Part of the snowshoe binding that secures the heel. It is a strap that wraps around the back of the snowshoer's footwear.
Lamp Wick	A 1 ½-inch cotton woven cord (oil lamp cord) used for binding snowshoes.
Pivot Rod	Attaches to the frame and allows the foot and binding to rotate as the snowshoer moves forward.
Tail	The rear area of a snowshoe frame.
Tip or Toe	The front area of a snowshoe frame.
Toe Hole	The opening in the front decking that allows the forefoot to pivot through a complete range of motion.
Tuque	A knitted hat adorned with a tassel on the top, the traditional headgear for snowshoers.

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