



Special Olympics North America Official Stand-up Paddling Sport Rules

SUMMER 2021

Special Olympics





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1. GOVERNING RULES

1.1 The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Stand-up Paddling shall govern all Special Olympics Competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon WORLD PADDLE ASSOCIATION rules found at <https://worldpaddleassociation.com/>. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Stand-up Paddling and SOI Article 1 shall apply. Refer to SOI Article 1, <http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/general/Sports-Rules-Article-1.pdf>, for more information pertaining to Codes of Conduct, Training Standards, Medical and Safety Requirements, Divisioning, Awards Criteria for Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition, and Unified Sports®. SOI will follow the safety rules, as well as skill levels defined for Stand-up Paddling. Special Olympics has created additional provisions to compliment the WPA's rules and race guidelines. Coaches are responsible for following the safety rules and following the skills progression for athletes and Unified partners.

2. OFFICIAL EVENTS

2.1 The range of events is intended to offer competition opportunities for athletes and Unified partners of all abilities. Programs may determine the events offered and, if required, guidelines for the management of those events. Coaches are responsible for providing training and event selection appropriate to each athlete and Unified partner's skill level and interest. The following is a list of official Stand-up Paddling events available in Special Olympics:

- 2.1.1 Tandem Events
- 2.1.2 Assisted Events
- 2.1.3 Double-Bladed events
- 2.1.4 Single-Bladed events
- 2.1.5 Metered Events
- 2.1.6 Relay Events
- 2.1.7 Sprint Events
- 2.1.8 Technical-Course Events
- 2.1.9 Unified Sports® Team Competition

3. COMPETITOR QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 All athletes and Unified partners (competitors) must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved type 1 or 2 (inherently buoyant) vest PFD (Personal Floatation Device) and a leash during all trainings and competitions. The exception is for competitors in the Tandem events, whereby the leash is required to go on the paddler in control of the board (i.e., coach).

- 3.1.1 For entry level competitions, all athletes and Unified partners must be able to stay afloat for a minimum of 3 minutes wearing a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type 1 or 2 (inherently buoyant) vest PFD.
- 3.1.2 For intermediate and advanced level competitions, all athletes and Unified partners must be able to independently swim 25m without and with a U.S. Coast Guard Type 1 or 2 (inherently buoyant) vest PFD.
- 3.1.3 Both tests must be administered annually by a Special Olympics certified Stand-up Paddling coach or Program staff member.
- 3.1.4 Individual events may also require athletes and Unified partners to successfully complete an on-site swim test to be able to compete at the event.



4. TANDEM EVENTS

4.1 The purpose of the Tandem event competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in an entry level Stand-up Paddling competition. There are three suggested options for Tandem events, all of which are “straight out and back” and could be lengthened or shortened based upon the body of water and conditions.

4.1.1 Tandem Flat – Athlete lays flat on board and uses hand(s) to paddle, while coach stands and paddles. Competition includes the following course lengths:

4.1.1.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)

4.1.1.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)

4.1.1.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)

4.1.2 Tandem Seated – Athlete sits on board and paddles while coach stands and paddles. Competition includes the following course lengths:

4.1.2.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)

4.1.2.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)

4.1.2.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)

4.1.3 Tandem Kneeling – Athlete kneels on board and paddles while coach stands and paddles. Competition includes the following course lengths:

4.1.3.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)

4.1.3.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)

4.1.3.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)

4.2 Event Requirements for Competitors

4.2.1 Leash is required to go on the paddler in control of the board (i.e., coach).

4.2.2 Both the athlete and coach must actively paddle during the competition. The coach will paddle and guide the board as the athlete actively paddles to the best of their ability.

5. ASSISTED EVENTS

5.1 The purpose of the Assisted event competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in an entry level Stand-up Paddling competition. There are three suggested options for Assisted events, all of which are “straight out and back” and could be lengthened or shortened based upon the body of water and conditions.

5.1.1 Assisted Flat – Athlete starts on board. Athlete lays flat on board and uses hand(s) to paddle, while an official paddles alongside on a separate board but does not assist with forward movement. Competition includes the following course lengths:

5.1.1.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)

5.1.1.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)

5.1.1.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)

5.1.2 Assisted Seated – Athlete starts on board. Athlete sits and paddles while an official paddles alongside on a separate board but does not assist with forward movement. Competition includes the following course lengths:

5.1.2.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)

5.1.2.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)

5.1.2.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)



- 5.1.3 Assisted Kneeling – Athlete starts on board. Athlete kneels and paddles while an official paddles alongside on a separate board but does not assist with forward movement. Competition includes the following course lengths:
 - 5.1.3.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)
 - 5.1.3.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)
 - 5.1.3.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)

6. DOUBLE-BLADED EVENTS

6.1 The purpose of the Double-Bladed event competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in an entry level Stand-up Paddling competition. Athletes competing in Double-Bladed events are physically unable to cross a single blade paddle across the board, as determined by officials. There are two suggested options for Double-Bladed events, all of which are “straight out and back” and could be lengthened or shortened based upon the body of water and conditions.

- 6.1.1 Double-Bladed Seated – Athlete starts on board. Athlete sits and paddles with a double-bladed paddle. Competition includes the following course lengths:
 - 6.1.1.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)
 - 6.1.1.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)
 - 6.1.1.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)
- 6.1.2 Double-Bladed Kneeling–Athlete starts on board. Athlete kneels and paddles with a double-bladed paddle. Competition includes the following course lengths:
 - 6.1.2.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)
 - 6.1.2.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)
 - 6.1.2.3 200 meters (100m and 100m back)

7. SINGLE-BLADED EVENTS

7.1 The purpose of the Single-Bladed event competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in an entry level Stand-up Paddling competition. There are two suggested options for Single-Bladed events, all of which are “straight out and back” and could be lengthened or shortened based upon the body of water and conditions.

- 7.1.1 Single-Bladed Seated – Athletes starts on board. Athlete sits and paddles with a single-bladed paddle. Competition includes the following course lengths:
 - 7.1.1.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)
 - 7.1.1.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)
 - 7.1.1.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)
- 7.1.2 Single-Bladed Kneeling – Athlete starts on board. Athlete kneels and paddles with a single-bladed paddle. Competition includes the following course lengths:
 - 7.1.2.1 50 meters (25m out and 25m back)
 - 7.1.2.2 100 meters (50m out and 50m back)
 - 7.1.2.3 200 meters (100m out and 100m back)



8. METERED EVENTS

8.1 The purpose of the Metered event competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in an intermediate or advanced level Stand-up Paddling competition. There are two different levels offered. For intermediate level athletes, Programs can determine if the competition format should be “straight out and back” or a course event, which could include multiple turns around buoys and requires a higher level of skill. Competition for advanced level athletes ~~should be~~ **are** course events.

8.1.1 Intermediate Events

8.1.1.1 200 meters (100m out and 100m back); or a 200m course

8.1.1.2 400 meters (200m out and 200m back); or a 400m course

8.1.1.3 800 meters (400m out and 400m back); or an 800m course

8.1.2 Intermediate Events Requirements (200 meters to 800 meters)

8.1.2.1 Athlete must be able to independently swim 25 meters without and with a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type 1 PFD or Type 2 PFD (inherently buoyant PFD vest).

8.1.2.2 Athlete must be tested annually by a certified Stand-up Paddling coach.

8.1.2.3 Athlete may receive verbal and physical assistance during competition. This includes verbal instructions and physical assistance steadying the board.

8.1.2.4 Athlete may lay flat, stand, kneel, or sit on the board during the competition; cannot change position to gain momentum.

8.1.2.5 Bow (nose) of board must go past or around buoys for all entry and intermediate events.

8.1.3 Advanced Events

8.1.3.1 800 Meters – Athlete starts on the board. Athlete may receive verbal and physical assistance preparing for competition. This includes verbal instructions and physical assistance steadying the board. Athlete must stand during competition unless physically unable to do so, as determined by officials. Must complete buoy turn(s).

8.1.3.2 1600 Meters – Athlete may receive verbal instruction preparing for competition, including verbal instruction to get onto board, but no physical assistance. Athlete must stand during competition unless physically unable to do so, as determined by officials, and must independently get on the board. Must complete buoy turn(s).

8.1.3.3 3200 Meters – Athlete competes with no verbal or physical assistance. Athlete must stand on board during competition unless physically unable to do so, as determined by officials. Athlete chooses their start (i.e., standing next to board, run and mount board). Must complete buoy turn(s). The 5-stroke rule applies.

8.1.3.4 4800 Meters – Athlete competes independently with no verbal or physical assistance. Athlete must stand on board during competition unless physically unable to do so, as determined by officials. Athlete chooses their start (i.e., standing next to board, run and mount board). Must complete buoy turn(s). The 5-stroke rule applies.



8.1.4 Advanced Event Requirements (800 Meters – 4800 Meters)

8.1.4.1 Athlete must be able to independently swim 25 meters without and with a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type 1 PFD or Type 2 PFD (inherently buoyant PFD vest).

8.1.4.2 Athlete must be tested annually by a certified Special Olympics Stand-up Paddling coach.

9. RELAY EVENTS

9.1 The purpose of the Relay event is to allow athletes to train and compete in an advanced level of Stand-up Paddling competition. Athletes compete as a team, independently and with no verbal or physical assistance. Teammates may assist with turning the board around during transitions. Teams of 3 athletes, with 1 board per team. 5-stroke rule applies. Competition will be a minimum distance of 200 meters (100m out and 100m back) with a minimum of 1 turn; each athlete must go around buoy(s). There is no set maximum distance for a relay, which will depend upon several factors, including the location and body of water.

9.1.1 Relay Event Requirements

9.1.1.1 Athlete must be able to independently swim 25 meters without and with a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type 1 PFD or Type 2 PFD (inherently buoyant PFD vest).

9.1.1.2 Athlete must be tested annually by a certified Stand-up Paddling coach.

9.1.1.3 Athlete must be able to independently prepare for and complete the event to include carrying their own board, assemble and adhere to safety protocols (PFD and leash), mount board and receive no verbal assistance.

10. SPRINT EVENTS

10.1 The purpose of the Sprint event competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in an advanced level of Stand-up Paddling competition. Athletes compete independently with no verbal or physical assistance. There are three options for sprint events.

10.1.1 100 Meters – Athlete sprints out 50m, goes around buoy(s), and then sprints back 50m.

10.1.2 200 Meters – Athlete sprints out 100m, goes around buoy(s), and then sprints back 100m.

10.1.3 400 Meters – Athlete sprints out 200m, goes around buoy(s), and then sprints back 200m.

10.1.4 Sprint Event Requirements

10.1.4.1 Athlete must be able to independently swim 25 meters without and with a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type 1 or Type 2 PFD (inherently buoyant PFD vest).

10.1.4.2 Athlete must be tested annually by a certified Stand-up Paddling Coach.

10.1.4.3 Athlete must be able to independently prepare for and complete the event to include carrying their own board, assemble and adhere to safety protocols (PFD and leash), mount board and receive no verbal assistance.



11. TECHNICAL EVENTS

- 11.1 The purpose of the Technical event competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in an advanced level of Stand-up Paddling competition. Athletes compete independently with no verbal or physical assistance. Competition will be a maximum of 4800 meters, including a maximum of 6-20 turns with right (red buoys) and left (yellow buoys) buoy shoulder turns (see sample courses Flag and Bowtie in appendix). If an athlete misses a buoy with the correct shoulder, the athlete must navigate back in order to complete the course correctly before continuing to the next buoy (athlete may be prompted by official). The 5-stroke rule applies. Completely missing a buoy turn with the correct shoulder may result in DQ (disqualification), as determined by officials.

12. UNIFIED SPORTS RELAY EVENTS

- 12.1 Unified Relay - The purpose of the Unified Sports® relay event competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in an advanced level of stand-up paddling competition. Athletes and Unified partners compete as a team, independently without verbal or physical assistance. Teammates may assist with turning the board around during transitions. Teams of 3 (2 athletes and 1 Unified partner), 1 board per team. The 5-stroke rule applies. Competition will be a minimum distance of 200 meters (100m out and 100m back) with a minimum of 1 turn; each athlete/Unified partner must go around buoy(s). There is no set maximum distance for a relay, which depends upon several factors, including the location and body of water. Unified relay events are best suited for the Unified Player Development and Competitive Models.
- 12.2 Requirements
- 12.2.1 Athletes and Unified partners must be able to independently swim 25 meters without and with a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type 1 PFD or Type 2 PFD (inherently buoyant PFD vest).
- 12.2.2 Athletes and Unified partners must be tested annually by a certified Stand-up Paddling coach.
- 12.2.3 Athlete and Unified partners must be able to independently prepare for and complete the event to include carrying their own board, assemble and adhere to safety protocols (PFD and leash), mount board and receive no verbal assistance.

13. EQUIPMENT

13.1 Leash and Personal Floatation Device (PFD)

- 13.1.1 All athletes and Unified partners training and competing in any event must wear a leash and U.S. Coast Guard approved Type 1 or Type 2 (inherently buoyant vest PFD). No cartridge PFDs of any kind are permitted.
- 13.1.2 The exception to the leash requirement is in the Tandem events, whereby the leash should go on the person in control of the board.
- 13.1.3 All non-competitors on water must wear a leash and any approved U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD.

13.2 Board Requirements

- 13.2.1 All events may use any board 14 feet and under.



13.3 Paddle Requirements

13.3.1 Unless stated otherwise, all competitors must use a single-bladed paddle for all events. The only exceptions are for the following two events:

- 13.3.1.1 Double-Bladed events, including both the Seated and Kneeling events, whereby a double-bladed paddle is used.
- 13.3.1.2 Flat events, including both the Tandem Flat and Assisted Flat, whereby the athlete uses their hands to paddle.

14. UNIFORMS (Required)

- 14.1 Female: One piece swimsuit. Male: Short type swimsuit/board shorts.
- 14.2 Long sleeve rash guard (recommend fluorescent)
- 14.3 Personal Flotation Device (PFD): Vest, no cartridge with whistle attached.
- 14.4 Recommended: Water shoes, hat/cap/visor, and sunglasses with a strap.

15. RULES OF COMPETITION

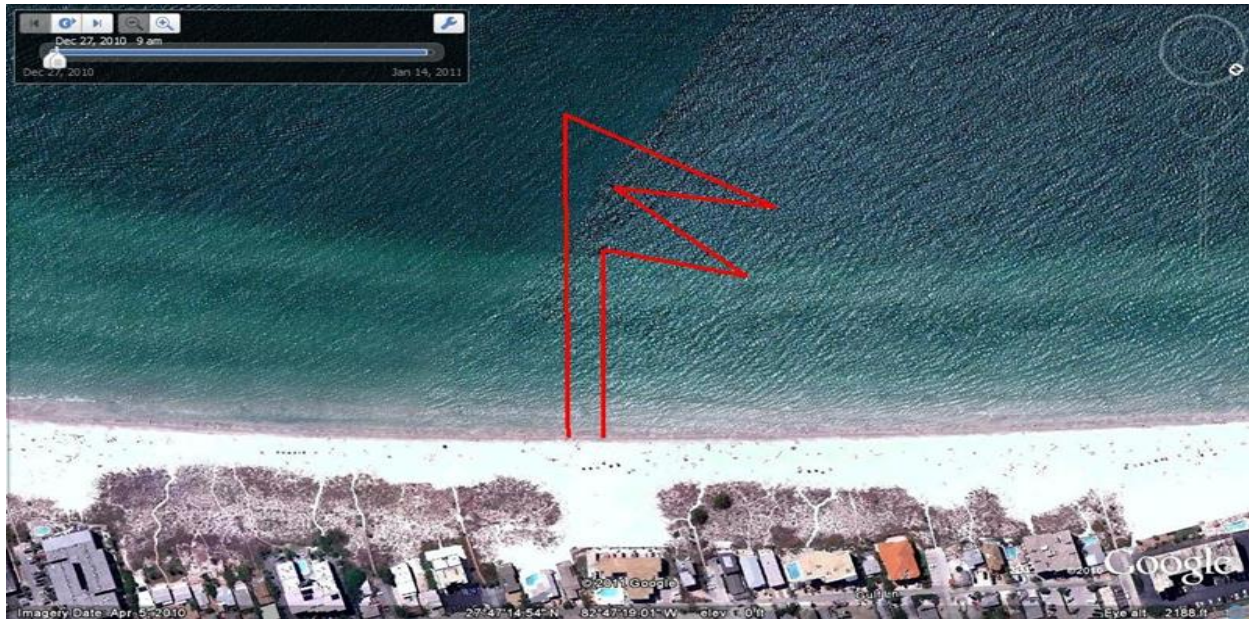
- 15.1 Safety is first and foremost in designing a Stand-up Paddling competition. Day-of water conditions and all racecourse information is to be given at a coaches meeting prior to the start of an event.
- 15.2 Only athletes and Unified partners competing in the event, along with officials and safety personnel are permitted to be on the water.
 - 15.2.1 Exception made for visually impaired athletes with a guide, if approved by the Head Official prior to the competition.
- 15.3 Five Stroke Rule – An athlete or Unified partner competing in a standing position may kneel on board in the event of falling off and getting back onto board and then may use 5 strokes to gain forward movement before regaining a standing position. Failure to regain standing position may result in DQ (disqualification) as determined by officials.
- 15.4 Hand Signals – race Officials will remind all competitors of the hand signals to be used if someone is injured or in danger.
 - 15.4.1 If in distress and in need of immediate assistance:
 - Signal = Wave of hand
 - 15.4.2 If in need of help but not injured:
 - Signal = One hand on head



APPENDIX

Racecourse Example Photos:

FLAG Course:



BOWTIE Course:

