



Special Olympics

Bocce Rules, Protocol & Etiquette



Table of Contents

Teaching Bocce Rules	3
Basic Rules for a Bocce Competition	3
Unified Sports® Rules	4
Protest Procedures	4
Bocce Protocol & Etiquette	5
Sportsmanship	7
Bocce Glossary	9



Teaching Bocce Rules

The best time to teach the rules of bocce is during practice. Please refer to Official Special Olympics Sports Rules Book for the complete listing of bocce rules. As a coach teaching the basic rules of bocce is critical to the success of the athletes for example, athletes should know what each of the lines on the court means, etc. Your athlete:

- ♦ Shows an understanding of the game.
- ♦ Understands that a game consists of playing to a certain number of points.
- ♦ Knows what each of the lines on the court means.
- ♦ Knows to watch for direction from Flag and Court Official as to turn to play.
- ♦ Knows that points scored as a result of a possible foul may not be counted as points scored.
- ♦ Knows to roll four balls in a singles competition.
- ♦ Knows to roll two balls in a doubles competition.
- ♦ Knows to roll only one ball in a fours competition.
- ♦ Adheres to the rules of the bocce court and training area.
- ♦ Follows official Special Olympics bocce rules.

Basic Rules for a Bocce Competition

1. Divisioning scores will be used to determine divisions for establishing sections.
2. The format for the competition can vary from a single elimination, double elimination or a round robin.
3. "Full tournament sized" balls, usually green and red, are used for the tournament.
4. Flags/bats/paddles of the same color as the balls are used.
5. In singles, players will play four balls each and the winning score will be first to 12 points.
6. In pairs/doubles, players will play two balls each and the winning score will be first to 12 points.
7. In fours/teams players will play one ball each and the winning score will be first to 16 points.
8. Athletes will follow the direction of the court officials at all times.
9. Ten-foot foul line, thirty-foot halfway lines are to be used during a competition.
10. All foul line violations are to be called as violations and penalties imposed.
11. All incorrect numbers of balls played or incorrect order of play are called as violations and penalties imposed.
12. Once all bocce balls have been rolled from both teams points will be awarded based on number of balls closer to the pallina than the opposing teams. (Only one team can be awarded points per end played.)
13. Games will be completed at the completion of the end in which a team scores the appropriate total number of points.

If for any reason coaches are unsure on any of the above rules, please contact the Tournament Director for bocce before the tournament starts.

Coaching Tips

Rules of the bocce court area are the rules you make for your program. These would include such things as:

- Athletes will remain outside the court area ready to play as soon as indicated by the court official.
- No food or drink, except water, when training and playing.
- Individuals should be designated to assist the lower ability players into and out of the court.



Unified Sports® Rules

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

Unified Sports Team

- ◆ Each Unified Sports doubles team shall consist of one athlete and one partner.
- ◆ Each Unified Sports team event shall consist of two athletes and two partners.
- ◆ Each game shall commence with a coin toss. Either member of the team that wins the toss starts the game by throwing the pallina and the first ball. The second ball is thrown by either member of the opposing team.

Protest Procedures

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition. The role of the competition management team is to enforce the rules. As coach, your duty to your athletes and team is to protest any action or event while your athlete is competing that you think violated the official Special Olympics bocce 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. Making a protest is a serious matter that impacts a competition's schedule. Check with the competition management team prior to competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition.



Bocce Protocol & Etiquette

While casual or fun games of bocce can be full of banter, laughter and frivolity, whenever serious bocce is played, as in a tournament or competition, there need to be certain rules of good sportsmanship and conduct that each competitor must follow. This will allow the athletes to compete at their best without any distractions.

Whether during practice or competition, athletes should be encouraged to abide by the following:

“Rules of the Court”

1. When it is not your turn, you should stand quietly out of the court.
2. Remain as quiet as possible from the time the other player has taken his/her stance until after he/she has delivered the ball.
3. Wait until the frame has been completed before moving to the other end of the court.
4. Always walk up the side of the court rather than up the middle of the court.
5. While waiting for another player to deliver the ball, always remain as motionless as possible.
6. Wait until the other player has delivered his/her ball and is about to move off the court before you step into the court to take your turn.
7. Always leave the balls as they lie until the official has instructed you to move them.
8. After you have delivered your ball, leave the court without undue or unnecessary delay.
9. Always observe safety rules when playing.
10. Always observe the instructions given by the official.
11. Always give your opponent the respect he/she deserves.
12. Always give the officials the respect they deserve.

During Practice

Athletes

- Always listen to information conveyed by their coach.
- Follow the instructions given by their coach.
- Prepare themselves ready to practice physically.
- Always dress in appropriate attire to practice bocce, i.e. correct shoes, clothes, etc.
- Follow any safety messages given by the coach.
- Pass on to the right people any important information that may have been given to them by their coach.
- Ask questions if they are unsure as to what the coach is asking them to do.

Coaches

- Always be on time and ready to start any training sessions.
- Ensure that your athletes and fellow coaches understand what the goal is for this training session.
- Give clear and concise instructions to all people attending your training sessions.
- Listen to any clarification from your athletes regarding information they may not understand.
- Instruct your athletes and fellow coaches on any health and safety issues regarding this training session.
- Always provide elements of learning and fun in your training sessions.



At Competition

Athletes

- ♦ Always listen to information conveyed by the court officials.
- ♦ Abide by the decisions made by the court officials.
- ♦ Show all respect and dignity to fellow competitors.
- ♦ Prepare themselves ready to play.
- ♦ Always dress in appropriate attire to play bocce, i.e. correct shoes, clothes, etc.

Coaches

- ♦ Ensure that your players are on time and ready to play.
- ♦ Ensure that your athletes and fellow coaches understand the local rules for this event as conveyed at previous training sessions.
- ♦ Ensure that your athletes' entry information is accurate, up to date and correct for this competition.
- ♦ Listen to any clarification from the competition/event manager.
- ♦ Abide by the instructions and decisions made by the court officials.



Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's 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 match/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 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 bocce etiquette, such as congratulating opponent after all events, win or lose; and controlling temper and behavior at all times.
- Teach waiting for one's turn during play.
- Teach standing quietly while waiting for your turn to play.
- Give sportsmanship awards or recognition after each meet or practice.
- Always commend the athletes when they demonstrate sportsmanship.



Remember

- ◆ Sportsmanship is an attitude that is shown in how you and your athletes act on and off the field of play.
- ◆ Be positive about competing.
- ◆ Respect your opponents and yourself.
- ◆ Always stay under control if you are feeling mad or angry.



Bocce Glossary

Term	Definition
Bank shot	Where the ball is played toward or off a wall or backboard to gain the advantage/point.
Bocce	Can also be spelled bocci or boccie. As with some other sports, e.g. basketball, this a term of two meanings in that it can be the balls played with during the game or can mean the game itself.
Dead ball	A ball that has been ruled, by the official, as a disqualified ball due to some form of infringement or technicality.
Doubles	A game played with teams of two players in opposing teams, sometimes called pairs or two-player team.
End	Also called a frame or round. A period of the game when all of the players have completed their turn and the points are awarded by the official, before the next “end” is played.
End boards	The boards at the end of the court. Sometimes these are suspended from the back walls of the court, and on other occasions they may be a solid wall. Players can use these to gain the advantage/point.
Foul	Relates to either a foot foul or a line foul, sometimes also called a foot line foul. The type and frequency of the foul will determine the penalty dealt to the player. This is usually called when a player oversteps the foul line or releases the ball after crossing the foul line.
Foul Line	The lines on a court that the player must stay behind before the ball is released, when playing either type of delivery (pointing or hitting shot). The hitting/pointing line is 10 feet from the end board.
Fours	A game played between a team of four players against another team of four players, sometimes called Teams or a four-player team.
Hitting	Also called spocking, popping or shooting. It is a shot usually played to displace other balls around the target ball, rather than playing a slow gentle roll to gain the advantage/point. The ball is usually played with such force as to reach the far end of the court. A player playing this type of shot may release the ball from anywhere up to the 10-foot hitting/pointing line.
Initial Point	The first ball rolled in an end toward the pallina to establish the initial point. If some form of foul is committed by this first ball played, the same team will roll the next ball to establish the initial point.
In	Also called the “in team.” This is used to describe the team that has the advantage or holds the point. The team closest to the pallina is deemed the "in team" and will now wait its turn until the opposition gets closer, whereupon the opposition becomes the “in team.”
Live ball	Can also be termed “good.” The phrase is used to explain to the players that the ball just rolled is a legitimate and legal ball and that the rest of the end can continue to be played. Consequently, if a foul is committed the ball is termed out or a dead ball.



Out	Also called the “out team.” As an opposite to “In” described above, this term is used to describe who does not hold the advantage or point at the present position in the end. This team will continue to play until they get closer and subsequently become the “in team,” or until they run out of balls to roll up.
Pairs	A game played between two players playing against another two players, sometimes called doubles or a two-player team.
Pallina	A 1¾ inch ball which is rolled down the court first.
Pallina Advantage	The team that holds the pallina advantage is the team that rolls the pallina down the court to start the end or game. After rolling the pallina, they then roll the first ball down to establish the initial point. The term “advantage” is given as this team can determine by the distance the pallina is rolled along the court, i.e. short end or long.
Pointing	Also called rolling or lagging. Unlike the hitting shot, this shot is played to get the ball close to the target ball, rather than trying to scatter the balls to displace other balls. This is a shot that is usually played with a soft smooth release and with finesse and a gentle motion. It is usually from a standing position rather than a running/moving one. Players must release the ball before crossing the hitting/pointing line.
Rule of advantage	The option given to a team when the opposition has committed a foul. The team can then choose what their options are, given the current positions of the balls and the state of the game.
Sideboards	The boards that surround and enclose a court, usually at least 6 - 12 inches high in the middle, to stop the balls from leaving the court. The official height of the wall is three feet at the end boards and taller than the height of the bocce ball along the side walls.
Singles	A game played between two players, one-on-one, sometimes called a one-player team.
Teams	A game played between a team of four players against another team of four players, sometimes called Fours or a four-player team.
Unified	Where a two-player or four-player team is made up of an equal number of Special Olympics athletes and Unified Partners on the same team. The same number of balls are played by each member of the team from the same end of the court. The ability of the Unified Partner should always be similar to that of the Special Olympics athlete he/she is to partner with.

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