



**SPECIAL OLYMPICS CANADA AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS BRITISH COLUMBIA  
DIVISIONING POLICY**

*This Policy has been prepared by Special Olympics Canada and is a Pan-Canadian Policy applicable to Special Olympics Canada and its Chapters. This document cannot be modified by a Chapter without consultation and approval from Special Olympics Canada.*

**EFFECTIVE DATE: November 2020**

**LAST REVISED: January 3, 2023**

**Purpose:**

Special Olympics Canada's sports competitions are based on the idea that athletes of all abilities should be given an equal chance of succeeding, whether success is defined as achieving a personal best or winning a gold medal. Athletes in competitions are therefore matched up with other athletes who share the same competition gender, a similar age, and most importantly, a similar competitive ability. Special Olympics Canada calls this competition-level matching "divisioning." Special Olympics Canada and its Chapters division athletes on the basis of competition gender identity, age, and ability in order to create the most equitable competition environment for all Special Olympics athletes.

This policy outlines the process to division athletes in three types of competitions: Individual Sports; Judged Sports and Team Sports. Divisioning cannot be protested or appealed.

**1. Divisioning Process for Individual Sports**

Step 1: Divide by Competition Gender (as defined by Special Olympics Canada)

Step 2: Divide by Ability

Proceed on the premise that the recommended performance difference between athletes in a division is 15%.

Step 3: Divide by Age (21 and under, 22 to 39, 40 and over)

If there are not enough athletes in an age group to create meaningful competition, age groups may be combined or not used at all at the discretion of SOC for National Competitions or the Chapters for Provincial/Territorial Competitions.

Step 4: Divide number of athletes registered in an event

*For 3 or more athletes:*

Place athletes into division no less than 3, no more than 8.

If you have more than 8 athletes in a division, reduce the performance percentage to produce new ability.

*For 2 Athletes entered into an event:*



Athletes compete against each other providing they have identified the same competition gender.

### *For 1 athlete entered into an event*

An athlete would compete against their own divisioning performance in the event. If they are competing against their own divisioning performance, medals would be awarded as follows:

Gold Medal: Final performance is better than the divisioning performance or below by a maximum of 4.99%

Silver Medal: Final performance is between 5-14.99% below the divisioning performance

Bronze Medal: Final performance is less than the seed performance by 15 -25%

For events that are not divisioned the athlete would be awarded a gold medal.

## **Disqualification in Divisioning**

For National Games, if an athlete is disqualified in a divisioning event, they will not advance to the finals. Athletes who are disqualified in a divisioning event will receive 0 performance points for that event.

Chapters can use their discretion for Provincial/Territorial Games and local competitions; however, the disqualification process (if implemented) must be documented.

## **2. Divisioning Process for Judged Sports**

Step 1: Divide by Competition Gender (as defined by Special Olympics Canada)

Step 2: Divide by ability, using predetermined levels of ability as outlined in sport rules and proceed on the premise that the recommended performance difference between athletes in a division is 15%.

### *Figure Skating*

If there are more than 8 competitors in a level, athletes will be divided by ability using their element scores.

### *Rhythmic Gymnastics*

If there are more than 8 competitors in a level a divisioning round will be run. Athletes will be divided according to their all-round scores for the final round.

Step 3: Divide by Age (21 and under, 22 to 39, 40 and over). If there are not enough athletes in an age group to create meaningful competition, age groups may be combined or not used at all at the discretion of SOC for National Competitions or the Chapters for Provincial/Territorial Competitions. In Provincial / Territorial Competitions where the number of competitors is high, Chapters may choose to increase the number of age groups to provide meaningful competition.

### **Maximum Performance Rule (MPR) for individual sports**

Divisioning is conducted to ensure that athletes compete against athletes of a similar ability level in their final event. To ensure that athletes compete at the best of their ability during divisioning, the maximum performance rule will be implemented.

Maximum performance would indicate that there should be no more than 15% difference in performance between divisioning and final events. If an athlete exceeds their divisioning event performance by 15% or more in the finals the following shall occur.

*Note: This can be applied only for timed/measured events.*

- Athlete is flagged under the Maximum Performance Rule (MPR)
- The athlete will be re-divisioned and placed in the correct division as indicated by their time/distance.
- The athlete will be eligible for a medal if their time/distance warrants.
- Re-divisioning will not affect the standing of athletes in the division where the flagged athlete is placed. (i.e. re-divisioned athlete places third in new division, current athlete in division will also be awarded third place).
- Flagged athlete will not receive any selection points (for advancement to higher levels of competition) for the event.
- The Maximum Performance Rule would not apply if an athlete when re-divisioned would still be placed in the same division.

If the coach is of the opinion that their athlete has not competed at the best of their ability in divisioning, and may be in danger of violating the MPR, they have the option to submit a faster time/longer distance for their athlete so that they can be placed in a division which reflects their ability.

## **4. Divisioning for Team Sports**

Step 1: Teams are placed in divisioning round groupings based on the Team Skill Assessment.

Step 2: The divisioning round will consist of a round of games in which each team will play against as many teams as possible aiming at an equal number of games per teams. The number and duration of games is at the discretion of the divisioning committee in order to fit in the schedule.

Step 3: Following the divisioning round teams will be placed in divisions. Results from the divisioning round will not carry forward to the final round.

Step 4: Head Coaches, with approval from the Chef de Mission, will have a 30-minute period after the divisioning is shared with them to submit feedback to the divisioning committee for consideration. It is at the divisioning committee's discretion whether to make changes to the final divisions or not based on the comments received. The divisioning committee will

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provide their final decision and rationale to the Head Coach and Chef de Mission before proceeding to Step 5.

Step 5: Final divisions will be shared with the Teams. Decisions are final and cannot be protested.

### **Fair Play Rule for Team Sports**

At any point after the divisioning round, if it is judged by the manager of the competition (Technical Rep, Sport Manager, Competition lead organizer, etc.) that a team did not provide a reasonable effort to display the maximum performance of the team's ability in the divisioning round, they must bring this to the attention of the assigned staff from SOC for National competitions or the Chapters for Provincial/Territorial competitions.

An ad hoc committee comprised of three (3) neutral members (such as Competition Manager, Senior Staff of SOC/Chapter, Referee-in-chief, etc.) may decide, after providing the Team's Coach the opportunity to present an explanation, at their discretion, to use one of the following consequences if they feel that the team should be in a different division: team disqualification, move the team to another division for the next round of competition, remove the team from consideration of identification for advancement to the next level of competition.

Decisions of the ad hoc committee are final and cannot be protested or appealed.