



Special Olympics Minnesota 2025 Poly Hockey Handbook

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COACH CERTIFICATION RATIO TABLE

The updated coach certification ratio tables can be found in the Special Olympics Minnesota Coaches Portal under policies and fact sheets, or here: [Coach Ratio Table](#)

MORE INFORMATION

Practice ideas, skill assessment/development, and rules can be found in the SOI Quick Start Guides and SOI Rules for each respective sport can be found at www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx

Special Olympics Minnesota has referenced the rules of floor hockey with Special Olympics International and Special Olympics Michigan when creating this handbook.

EQUIPMENT

Sticks – Non-goalie sticks must be two-piece. The shaft can be plastic or fiberglass, but the blade must be plastic. Ice hockey sticks are not allowed. Goalkeeper sticks can be plastic or fiberglass shaft and blade and are not required to be a two-piece stick.

Center sticks must be striped with contrasting tape to indicate the center. The blade can also be taped; however, no other player's stick may have this tape. Athletes may curve the blade of their sticks, but the curvature cannot exceed the width of a dime.

Pucks – Special Olympics Minnesota uses a hard plastic/vinyl/PVC puck for competition.

The main color used at competitions is orange, however there may be other colors used if a team requires it due to players with visual impairments. Teams will be required to use the other colored puck (usually black) when this is the case.

Helmets and Pads – All athletes must wear hockey helmets with full facemasks.

Optional equipment includes shin guards, elbow pads, mouth guards, knee pads, gloves, and protective cups. All players must have a number on the back of their jersey.

Goals – Goals shall not be larger than 1.5 meters (5 feet) by 1.2 meters (4 feet).

Goalkeeper Equipment – Must wear a face mask with helmet and throat protector.

Optional equipment includes a catching glove, shin pads, blocking pad, mouth guard, and protective cup. Excessive shin pads and blocking pads are not allowed. No modifications to enhance the size of the blocking surface.

Illegal Equipment – All equipment is subject to examination at any time. Illegal equipment will be held by the competition committee until the end of the competition.

ROSTER

Six positions on the floor at any time:

- Center – the only player allowed to move the full length of the court. Active on both offense and defense. The center must take all face-offs.
- Two offensive players – must always have at least one foot in the offensive zone to be considered onside. Offensive players may have one foot in the defensive zone and/or may reach across the center line with his/her stick.
- Two defensive players – must always have at least one foot in the defensive zone to be considered onside. Defensive players may have one foot in the offensive zone and/or may reach across the center line with his/her stick.
- Goalkeeper – one goalkeeper who is not restricted to the goal crease, but only has the privileges of a goalkeeper when they have at least one foot in the crease.

Team Size – Minimum roster – 7; maximum roster – 16.

A team needs to start the game with the minimum number of required positions filled to avoid a forfeit. If an injury occurs during a game, they can drop to one short and continue that game.

Playing Time – All players on a team’s roster are required to play during the game, but players are not required to play equal amounts.

Substitutions – Allowed only at the 3- and 6-minute mark of each period or in case of an injury. Teams can make a substitution when a timeout is called (opposing team or their own). Teams will be assessed a warning followed by a penalty which an on-court player will serve if any substitution issues occur.

Goalkeeper Substitution – If a team pulls their goalie (only in the last two minutes of the game during a stoppage of play or timeout), they will be allowed an additional center. This substitution must occur during a timeout. The additional center has all the rights of the original center and can go anywhere on the court (must have striped stick).

Offensive/Defensive Players – A change of position between defensive and offensive players can be made when the puck is dead, and the clock is stopped. A team must also notify the referee that a change is being made.

RULES OF COMPETITION

Time and Periods – Three 9-minute periods. The first two periods will be running time and the third period will be stop time. One-minute break in between each period.

Puck is placed at center court at the beginning of each period.

Clock stoppage happens anytime the official stops the play (timeout, injury, goal scored, penalty or infraction). Running time occurs in games with a 7-goal difference.

If a team has a lead of 10 or more goals anytime in the third period, they will be declared the winner of the game. Teams will still play out the rest of the game, but scoring will not be updated on the scoreboard or scoresheet. All other facets of gameplay (penalties, substitutions, etc.) will continue throughout the entirety of the game. Scoresheets will mark if this mercy rule was used.

The puck will stay in the zone it was in when the 3- and 6-minute stoppage occurs.

Teams will have one minute between each period to make line changes. Teams will not switch ends between periods unless both teams agree.

Teams will have two, 1-minute timeouts per game and may only call one timeout per period. Only one timeout per overtime (no carryover). Timeouts may only be called during a normal stoppage of play. A bench penalty will occur if called during a live play.

If the score is tied at the end of the third period, play shall resume with a 3-minute stop time, sudden death overtime period. If the game remains tied at the end of the first overtime, the game shall be decided by a shootout.

The puck may be advanced by either a player's stick or a player's feet. However, no goal can be scored by a player's foot.

Face-Offs – Face-offs start at the center circle and at the sound of the referee's whistle.

When there is a face-off at center court, forwards will line up on the offensive side of the center line. All players not involved in the face-off must be approximately 3 meters from the face-off circle during the face-off. The referee will place the puck and play is started at the sound of the whistle.

When a goalkeeper traps or freezes the puck, play will resume with a face-off at the nearest face-off circle.

Goalkeepers – May handle the puck with their hands or other parts of their body. Goalkeepers may trap the puck with their feet, stick or hands. Play will then resume with a face-off at the nearest face-off circle.

The goalkeeper must start in a standing position and may not use excessive equipment. When clearing the puck with their hands the goalkeeper must toss the puck in an underhand manner at a 45-degree angle. If the goalkeeper is clearing the puck with their stick, they can clear the puck in any direction. The goalkeeper can freeze the puck.

There must always be a goalkeeper except for the last two minutes of regulation time or of an overtime period. During the last two minutes of the game, the goalkeeper may be removed during a normal stoppage of play and replaced by a substitute. The goalkeeper may return to the game, replacing the substitute who was originally substituted for him/her.

Offensive players are not allowed in the goal crease at any time. It is an infraction when an offensive player and/or their stick goes into the goal crease at any time. This rule does not apply to the goalkeeper and defensive players.

Athletes using a wheelchair are allowed to play goalie. However, to create a fair and equal competition environment, goalies using wheelchairs will be required to position facing forward from the goal or toward the location of the face-off on every face-off. One coach is allowed to be behind the goal and can enter the court only during stoppages in play to adjust the facing of the wheelchair.

Wheelchair goalies are allowed to tape their sticks either perpendicular or parallel to the wheelchair. As non-wheelchair goalies are required to start from a standing position and are not allowed to lie across the front of the goal, goalies using a wheelchair may not remain positioned stationary and sideways across the goal opening; the goalie should be trying to follow the play.

Scoring – Each goal is worth one point. The puck must cross the goal line completely to count.

The puck can be deflected off a player or piece of equipment accidentally into the goal and be considered a goal. The puck cannot be kicked or thrown into the goal by an offensive player.

A goal cannot be scored on an offensive foul or with an offensive player or his/her stick in the goal crease. If a defensive player is in the goal crease when a goal is scored, the goal will still count.

A goal will be scored if the puck is put into the goal by a defensive player. A goal can also be scored from a face-off in any location.

The puck needs to be in the goal before the signal sounds to end the period to count.

Shootout – The shootout will consist of three rounds and the start will be determined by a coin flip. Teams will alternate attempts.

A round will consist of one athlete from each team getting a breakaway opportunity starting from the center face-off and shooting at the opponent's goal.

Teams will pick three different athletes to participate in the shootout. The athlete should keep forward momentum and the referee has the right to wave off a goal if the athlete stops forward progress and moves backward. Spinning is not allowed during a shootout from the offensive player. Crease infractions will result in the goal being waived off.

If the shootout is tied after three rounds, it will go into sudden death rounds until one team scores and the other does not. An athlete cannot shoot twice until the team has gone through the entire roster in a shootout. Goalies cannot shoot in the shootout.

Tiebreak Scenarios – If there is a 3-way tie it is broken by total goals allowed to decide the highest place. It is then followed by head-to-head between second and third teams.

Forfeits are marked as a 0-10 loss. Teams that forfeit 50% or more of their games in a competition will receive a participation award. In the event of a tie within a division, if a team has forfeited one game, they will automatically take last place within the tiebreak.

DISCIPLINE

Infractions – These result in the referee stopping play. Face-off location is dependent on the type of infraction.

On a defensive infraction, the face-off will take place next to the nearest circle. On an offensive infraction, the face-off will be held at the opposite end of the court in the nearest circle.

On certain infractions, a delayed infraction may be called. The infraction that resulted in the delayed infraction will not be called until the team on defense at the time of the infraction takes possession of the puck, advances the puck, or a goal is scored against the defending team.

On an athlete's fifth infraction, they will receive a one-and-a-half-minute penalty.

Infractions occur in the following instances:

- When a player deliberately hold, lies on, or steps on the puck.
- When a goalkeeper uses an overhand throw, throws the puck to the center side of the dotted line coming out 45 degrees from the goalposts of their goal (delayed infraction).
- When a forward or defensive player crosses the center court line (delayed infraction).
- When a player other than the goalkeeper deliberately leaves their feet to block a pass or shot (delayed infraction).
- When an offensive player and/or their stick goes into the goal crease at any time
- When high sticking takes place. This infraction occurs when a player raises their stick above their waist.

Play does not stop when a puck leaves the court. The referee will simply drop a puck in play at the spot closest to where the puck left the playing area. The new puck is live as soon as it hits the floor.

Coaches must stay in their team's designated bench area/coaching area. If violated, teams will be assessed a warning followed by a penalty if continued. An on-court player will serve this penalty.

Penalties – Result in a one-and-a-half-minute expulsion of the offending player or a player to be determined by the coach in the case of a bench penalty. The offending team will play a person short for the duration of the penalty unless the opposing team scores a goal. Penalty time begins at the start of the next play.

Penalties occur in the following instances:

- When a player charges an opponent from behind, trips, elbows, or intentionally pushes them.
- When a player crosschecks an opponent.
- When any deliberate roughness takes place.
- When a player accumulates five infractions.
- When a bench penalty takes place.
- When unsportsmanlike conduct takes place.

If a center receives a penalty, the team loses that position for the duration of the penalty. During this time, another player will take the face-offs but does not have the ability to go the length of the court.

Ejections – A player or coach who commits an act which results in an ejection penalty must leave the playing area for the remainder of the game and will not be allowed to return to the following game (at minimum). Players or coaches will be eligible to return the next day at the event management’s discretion.

Ejections occur in the following instances:

- When a player/coach commits three penalties or ten infractions.
- When a player deliberately does anything that could cause injury or harm.
- When a coach’s conduct becomes detrimental to the players and/or game. If, after the ejection, the coach’s misconduct continues, the game will be forfeited.
- When a player/coach intentionally throws or swings a stick.
- When a player engages in a fight or throws a punch.

When a player is ejected from a game, a teammate shall serve the one-and-a-half-minute penalty. An alternate may substitute for the ejected player after the one-and-a-half-minute penalty has been served.

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 focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes by leading 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 game; Never quit

Fair Play Always

- Comply with the rules
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play
- Respect the decision of the officials

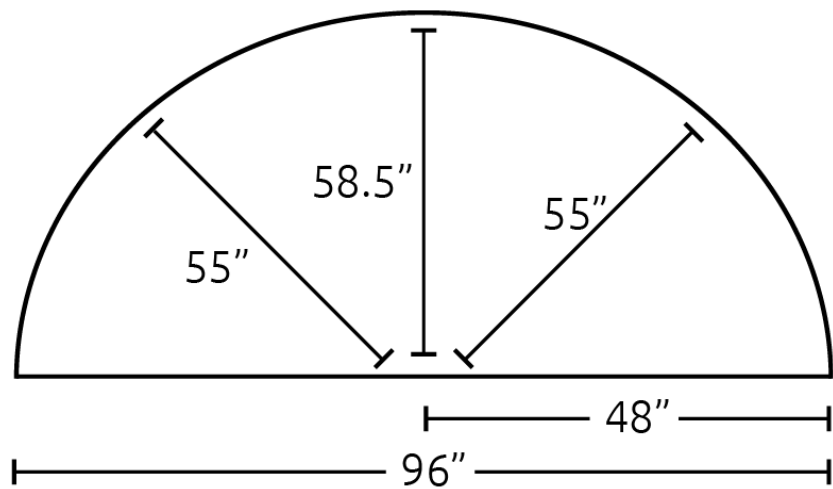
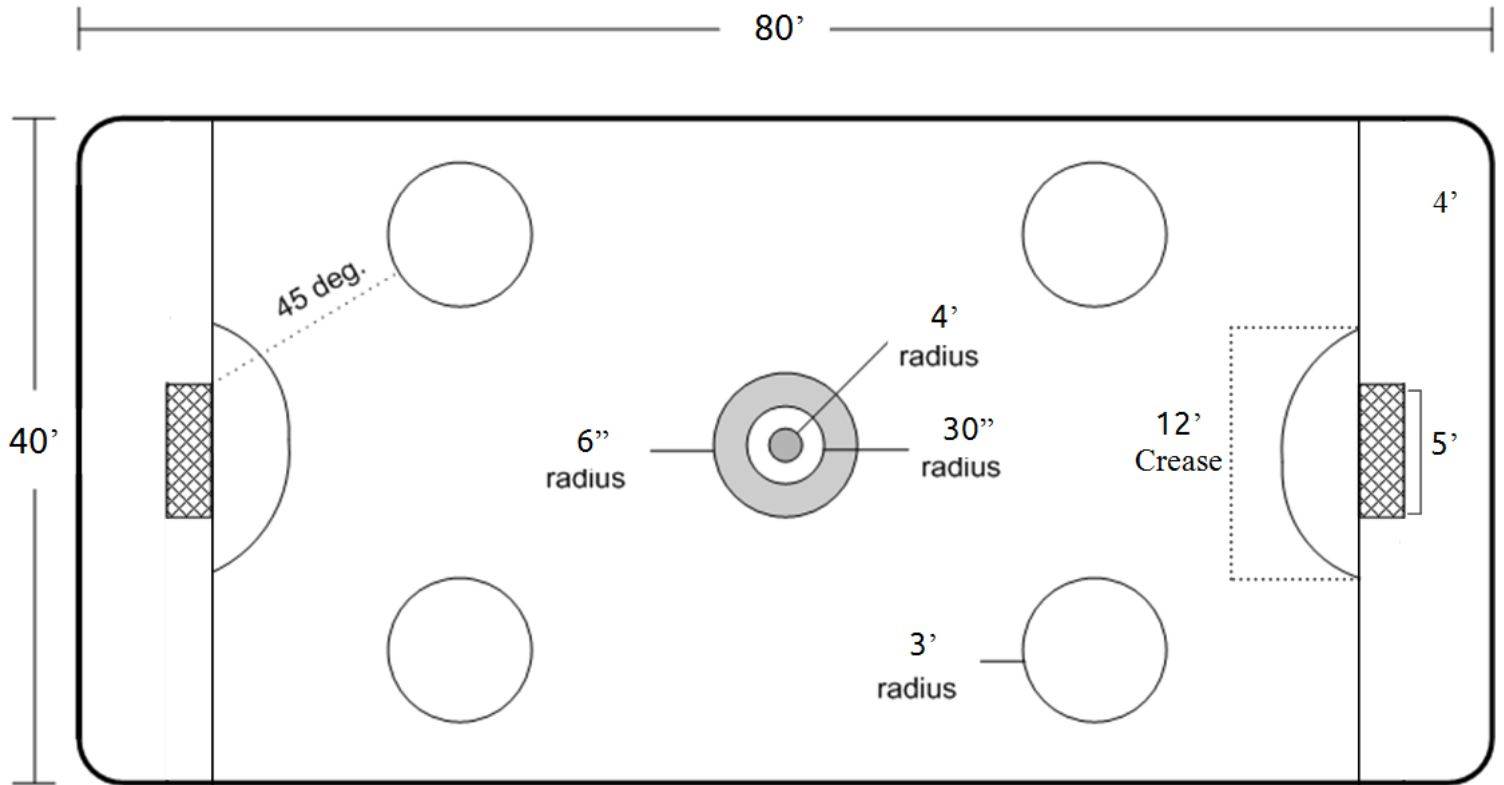
REGISTRATION INFORMATION

As a part of the regional registration process, each team will be registered with a level: Novice, Intermediate, or Advanced. This will replace our process of requiring individual qualifying scores. Below is information that will assist coaches with deciding which level is best for their team to compete at. Teams will be placed in divisions with teams in the same level, and all levels will follow the same rules of play.

The state office has discretion to assign levels based on regional gameplay, past results, or other information that has been provided by the coaching staff. If a coach needs more assistance in deciding team level, reach out to the state office.

LEVELS OF PLAY			
Competency	NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
Game Awareness	The team has a basic conceptual understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Team Offense <input type="checkbox"/> Team Defense <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Sport Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Awareness 	The team has a moderate conceptual understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Team Offense/Set Plays <input type="checkbox"/> Team Defense <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Sport Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> In-Game Adjustments 	The team has an advanced conceptual understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Team Offense/Set Plays <input type="checkbox"/> Team Defense <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Sport Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> In-Game Adjustments <input type="checkbox"/> Game Strategy
Technical Skills	The team has basic sport skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shooting <input type="checkbox"/> Passing <input type="checkbox"/> Puck Handling 	The team has moderate sport skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shooting <input type="checkbox"/> Passing <input type="checkbox"/> Puck Handling <input type="checkbox"/> Goaltending 	The team has advanced sport skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shooting <input type="checkbox"/> Passing <input type="checkbox"/> Puck Handling <input type="checkbox"/> Goaltending <input type="checkbox"/> Moving without the puck
Tactical Awareness	The team has basic skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> On-court Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movement 	The team has moderate skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> On-court Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movement <input type="checkbox"/> End-to-End Transition 	The team has advanced sport skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> On-court Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Player Movement <input type="checkbox"/> End-to-End Transition <input type="checkbox"/> Game speed and tempo
Intangibles	The team has basic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speed/Quickness <input type="checkbox"/> Endurance/Fitness <input type="checkbox"/> Size/Strength 	The team has moderate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speed/Quickness <input type="checkbox"/> Endurance/Fitness <input type="checkbox"/> Size/Strength 	The team has advanced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speed/Quickness <input type="checkbox"/> Endurance/Fitness <input type="checkbox"/> Size/Strength
Coaching	Coaches have a basic understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sport rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Management + Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Game Instruction + Player Development 	Coaches have a moderate understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sport rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Management + Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Game Instruction + Player Development 	Coaches have an advanced understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sport rules <input type="checkbox"/> Game Management + Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Game Instruction + Player Development

POLY HOCKEY RINK DIMENSIONS



EQUIPMENT LIST

The equipment needed can be found at separate locations online.

- Hockey sticks – Blade and shaft must be plastic, not taped. Amount of curvature cannot exceed the width of a dime.
- Goalkeeper stick – May have wooden shaft, but blade must be plastic.
- Center's stick – Shaft must be striped with contrasting tape. Blade can also be striped.
- Pucks – Hard plastic/vinyl
- Helmets – All athletes must wear hockey helmets. Face mask required.
- Pads – These are optional and can include shin guards, elbow pads, mouth guards, knee pads, protective cups, etc.
- Goals – No larger than 1.5 meters (5 feet) by 1.2 meters (4 feet)
- Goalkeeper Equipment – Goalies must have a throat protector or neck guard, in addition to their helmet with face mask. Other optional equipment includes a catching glove, shin pads, blocking pad, mouth guard, protective cup, etc.
- Plastic cones – For training/drill purposes
- Rink barriers – setup as listed on previous page