

2025 CORNHOLE

GENERAL RULES

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall govern all Special Olympics Cornhole competition. Special Olympics have worked with the American Cornhole Association (ACA) to determine the rules for Special Olympics play.

Rules Change Summary

- 1) Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) and Special Olympics North America (SONA) have adopted the American Cornhole Association (ACA) rules. SOWI will utilize Synergy Touring Professional Bags at the District and State competitions. This is a change from the bags utilized in the past.
- 2) For teams to compete at the District and State Cornhole Competitions, each team must compete in at least two documented scrimmage games. Local Programs are encouraged to scrimmage teams within their District/Region.
- 3) The 2025 Cornhole season will be a qualifying season for the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games. Teams must place 1st at the 2025 Summer Games Competition in order to be eligible for selection for the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games. Only athletes who compete in Level 2 or Unified competitions will be eligible (not Developmental or Level 1).

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1. OFFICIAL EVENTS

1.1.1. Team Competition (doubles two-person)

1.1.1.1. Level 1 (21 ft court) & Level 2 (27 ft court)

1.1.1.2. Unified Sports® Team (27 ft court)

1.1.1.3. Developmental Team Competition (18 ft court)

2. ROSTERS

2.1.1. In traditional doubles, a team roster shall consist of a minimum number of two players with a maximum of three players. A team must have two players to start a game. Failure to start with two players will result in a forfeiture of the game(s). Teams must be ready to field a legal team within ten minutes of the declared start of the game or the game will be forfeited.

2.1.2. In all Unified Sports Doubles matches, teams may carry two additional players available for substitution. The two available substitutes must consist of one athlete and one partner.

3. SUBSTITUTIONS

- 3.1.1. Substitutions may be made at the end of any inning of play, with approval from the court official. Substitutes may take the place of any player on the team.
- 3.1.2. Officials must be notified of the substitutions at the time of substitution.
- 3.1.3. Once a player has been removed from the match via substitution, the player may not re-enter the match at any point. Once a substitution has been made, the substitute player must complete the match.
- 3.1.4. During Unified Team Play, all teams must maintain the ratio of Athlete to Partner and Unified Rules.

4. FACILITY REQUIREMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

4.1.1. CORNHOLE BOARDS

- 4.1.1.1. Each cornhole board shall be 47½ to 48 inches in length and 23½ to 24 inches wide, made of smooth plywood that measures at least ½-inch in thickness.
- 4.1.1.2. The hole in each cornhole board shall be 6 inches (+-¼-in) in diameter. Its center shall be 9 inches (+-¼-in) from the top and 12 inches (+-¼-in) from each side of the board edges.
- 4.1.1.3. The front of the cornhole board shall be 3-4 inches from bottom to top.
- 4.1.1.4. The back of the cornhole board shall be approximately 12 inches (+- ¼-in) from ground to the highest point of the deck.
- 4.1.1.5. The board finish shall be sanded to a very smooth texture, and there shall not be any blemishes on the wood surface that might disrupt or distort play.
- 4.1.1.6. Application of non-permanent foreign substances onto cornhole boards is strictly prohibited. This includes talc, resin, spray, or powders.

4.1.2. CORNHOLE BAGS

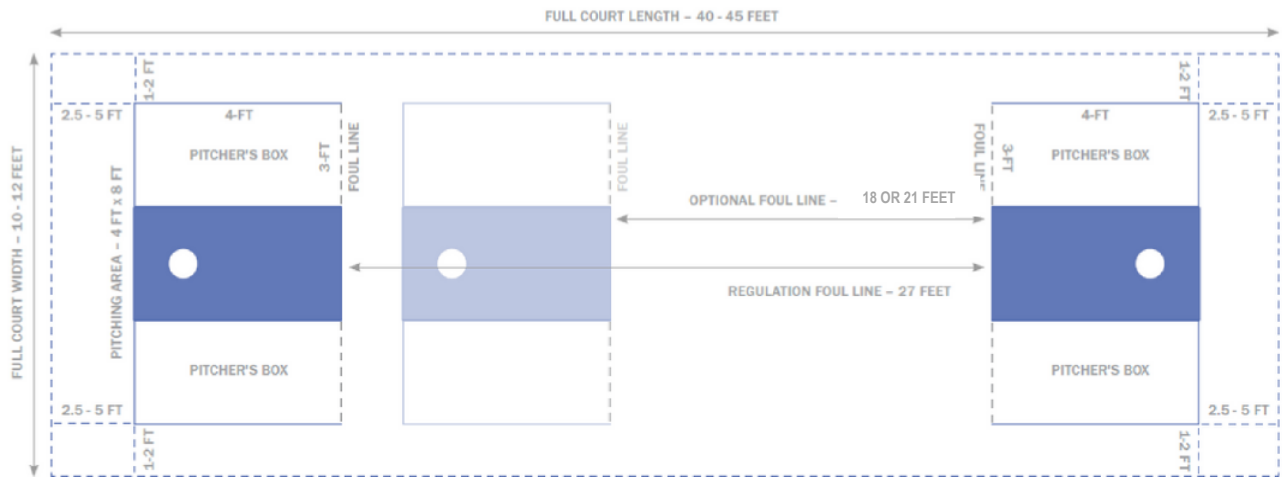
- 4.1.2.1. The cornhole bags shall be made from two fabric squares 6¼ x 6¼ inches with a ¼-inch stitched seam on all four sides.
- 4.1.2.2. Synergy Touring Professional Bags will be the official bag used during competitions above the Regional level.
- 4.1.2.3. The thickness of the bag when lying flat on a hard surface should be approximately 1 inch (+-⅛-in) thick.
- 4.1.2.4. Each bag shall be filled with plastic pellets or corn feed and finished bags should be roughly 6 inches square and weigh 14-16.25 ounces.
- 4.1.2.5. All bags in a set of four shall be identical in color, design, or pattern.
- 4.1.2.6. A player may not switch bags during gameplay unless a bag is damaged or broken during a game.
 - 4.1.2.6.1. In the case of a broken bag during a game, an identical or equivalent set of 4 bags may be substituted for the team.

4.1.3. THE COURT

- 4.1.3.1. A cornhole court shall be a level rectangular area 10-12 feet wide and a minimum of 40-45 feet long. The court consists of two cornhole boards, designated pitcher's boxes, and foul lines. A vertical clearance of 12 feet is strongly recommended for indoor or sheltered cornhole courts.
- 4.1.3.2. The pitcher's box is a rectangle 4 feet by 3 feet at each end of the court, parallel with, and on both sides of the boards. Each player must remain in the pitcher's box while pitching a cornhole bag.

4.1.3.3. The foul lines are imaginary lines parallel to the front of each cornhole board. The foul-line distance for official gameplay is 27 feet. However, local programs may choose to offer a 18-ft. or 21-ft. throwing distance, according to an athlete's skill assessment.

4.1.3.4. To eliminate distraction and safely separate activity, cornhole courts adjacent to each other shall be a minimum of 10 feet wide. A greater distance of at least 12 feet is preferable



5. RULES OF COMPETITION

5.1. DIVISIONING

- 5.1.1. Prior to the District and State competition, teams will be divisioned according to coaches' input and scores of at least two games played versus other Special Olympics teams. (NOTE: Local Programs are encouraged to scrimmage teams within their District/Region. This will help the divisioning process). **NOTE: Two games played before District competition registration deadline is mandatory!** Teams will be divisioned based on coaches evaluation/narrative and historical data. Please include your two documented games in the game commentary.
- 5.1.2. Divisions are subject to change day-of competition.

5.2. PREGAME/COIN TOSS

- 5.2.1. Prior to beginning the game, a coin toss determines playing lanes and sequence of play. An official present assigns heads and tails to each team.
- 5.2.2. The team that wins the coin toss chooses ***either*** their throwing lane or the throwing order in the first round of play.
- 5.2.3. The team that did not win the coin flip chooses the remaining option.

5.3. DOUBLES CORNHOLE RULES

- 5.3.1. Two teams, consisting of two players, compete against one another until a winning team is determined.
- 5.3.2. Players line up directly across from their playing partner, in the same lane.
- 5.3.3. In Unified Sports, partners and athletes should be aligned at opposite boards. In this setup, partners toss against partners, and athletes toss against athletes.
- 5.3.4. Each team stays in their designated lane for the whole game.
- 5.3.5. Players at the headboard alternate pitching bags until each player has pitched all four of their bags.
- 5.3.6. An inning is completed when both players, pitching from one board, pitch all eight bags (four each).
- 5.3.7. Officials take the score and players at the footboard resume pitching back to the other board.
- 5.3.8. All players who are not pitching bags, should be behind the cornhole board, outside of the pitcher's box, to prevent interference of play.

5.4. SCORING

- 5.4.1. In cancellation scoring, the points of one player cancel out the points of their opponent. Using this method, only one team can score in each inning.
- 5.4.2. Bag In-The-Count (Woody): Any bag which comes to rest anywhere on top of the board. Each is worth one (1) point.
- 5.4.3. Bag In-The-Hole (Cornhole): Any bag which is thrown through the hole or knocked through the hole by another bag. Each is worth three (3) points.
- 5.4.4. Foul Bags – Refers to any bag that has not been determined as Bag In-The-Count or Bag In-The Hole or was designated a foul bag as the result of rules violation. Each is worth zero (0) points.

5.5. WINNING THE GAME

- 5.5.1. The game shall be played to the predetermined number of twenty-one (21) points. The first team to reach (or exceed) that amount at the conclusion of an inning is the winner.

5.6. PITCHING

- 5.6.1. The team who scored in the preceding inning has the honor of pitching first in the next inning. If neither team scores, the team who pitched first in the preceding inning shall retain first pitch in the next inning.
- 5.6.2. A player must pitch all four bags from their designated pitcher's box.
- 5.6.3. Players must pitch the bag with an underhand release.
- 5.6.4. A player may not step over or contact the foul line during their pitching or release of a cornhole bag.
- 5.6.5. A player must wait until the previous bag has come to a complete stop for at least 2 seconds before pitching the next bag.
- 5.6.6. Players may not jump, blow, kick, or otherwise do anything that may affect the cornhole board or the position of bags during an inning.
- 5.6.7. Touching, adjusting, or aligning a cornhole board during an inning is prohibited. Court officials may align the cornhole board between innings at the request of a player.

5.7. OVERTIME

- 5.7.1. Each game may be given a time limit according to the competition manager's discretion. (See "Game Clock" section below).
- 5.7.2. If neither team has reached 21 points before time expires, the round is over and the team that is winning the round at that point wins the match.
- 5.7.3. In the event the score is tied after time expires, one more inning is played.
- 5.7.4. If no player scores after one tiebreaker inning, a Sudden Death bag is played.
 - 5.7.4.1. In this round, following the natural flow of the game, the last frame winner tosses a single bag.
 - 5.7.4.2. The opponent then tosses one bag, attempting to match or beat the first player's throw.
 - 5.7.4.3. Whichever player scored more points from the Sudden Death Bag is considered the winner of the game.
 - 5.7.4.4. Additional Sudden Death Bags may be played until a winner is declared.
 - 5.7.4.5. All Sudden Death Bags should follow the natural flow of the game.

5.8. FORFEITURE

- 5.8.1. Teams with less than the prescribed number of players before the match begins must forfeit the match.
- 5.8.2. The score of a forfeited game shall be 21-0 in favor of the team not at fault.

5.9. VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES

- 5.9.1. Foul bags and rules violations are divided into impacting fouls and non-impacting fouls. A court official is responsible for spotting and calling penalties. The court official must determine if a foul bag was impacting or non-impacting.
- 5.9.2. NON-IMPACTING BAGS
 - 5.9.2.1. If a foul bag does not impact game play or any other bag in play, the bag is considered dead and is removed from play at time of infraction. This bag scores 0 points for the round. All other bags remain in play.
 - 5.9.2.2. No other movement of bags is permitted at this time.
 - 5.9.2.3. The only person allowed to remove a bag from play is a court official.
- 5.9.3. IMPACTING BAGS

- 5.9.3.1. If the bag in question impacts the position of one or more bags in play, it is an impacting bag foul.
- 5.9.3.2. Leave the bag in question and all affected bags in play.
- 5.9.3.3. Continue the round until the end of the inning without touching or removing any bags.
- 5.9.3.4. At the end of the inning, the team that threw the offending bag removes the highest value bag in play.
- 5.9.3.5. The only person allowed to move bags is a court official.

Example 1: Team A steps over the line during their 3rd toss of the round. The offending bag knocks a bag from Team B off the board. Bags are not replaced or affected at this time. At the end of the round, subtract *the highest scoring bag* from Team A from the scoring calculation.

If 0 points were scored for Team A in the inning, no scoring updates are made.

Example 2: If Team A throws a bag and is on the ground but is touching the board and Team B throws a bag and hits the board but is touching the bag on the ground, Team B's bag is considered dead. Both bags will be removed and play will continue.

5.9.4. LIST OF FOULS

- 5.9.4.1. The following are foul violations that must be spotted and called by an assigned judge. A foul is assessed to the offending team.
- 5.9.4.2. Any bag pitched when the player has made contact with or crossed over the foul line.
- 5.9.4.3. Any bag pitched when the player has started or stepped completely outside the pitcher's box before the bag is released.
- 5.9.4.4. Any bag not delivered within the 20-second time limit.
- 5.9.4.5. Any bag pitched from a different pitcher's box than the first bag.
- 5.9.4.6. Any bag that is not pitched with an underhand release.

5.9.5. INTERRUPTING GAMEPLAY

- 5.9.5.1. A player shall not touch, alter, move, or affect the board or any bags on the board or in the hole before scoring has been agreed upon for the inning.
- 5.9.5.2. If this foul occurs during play, please refer to IMPACTING BAG section above.
- 5.9.5.3. If this foul occurs at the conclusion of an inning, and before a court official has taken score, the non-offending team receives 3 points for each bag removed prior to scoring confirmation.

5.9.6. FOULING OUT

- 5.9.6.1. Any team that commits 3 or more fouls in a match automatically loses the match. The match ends immediately.
- 5.9.6.2. The non-offending team is awarded up to 21 points and wins the match.
- 5.9.6.3. The offending team ends the game with the score they have when the 3rd foul occurs.

5.9.7. DEAD BAGS

- 5.9.7.1. Any bag that contacted the court or the ground before coming to rest on the board shall be ruled a dead bag.
- 5.9.7.2. Any bag that struck a previously defined object such as a tree limb, wire, indoor court ceiling, etc. shall be ruled a dead bag.

- 5.9.7.3. Immediately remove the bag from play and continue the round. The offending team is not assessed any penalty or foul.
- 5.9.7.4. If the bag impacts another bag, remove the offending bag where it lies and leave the remaining bags as they lie and continue play. The offending team is not assessed any penalty or foul.

5.9.8. ADDITIONAL FOUL RULES

- 5.9.8.1. A bag that leaves a player's hand once the final forward swing of the delivery process has started shall count as a pitched bag.
- 5.9.8.2. A bag that is accidentally dropped by a player before the final forward swing has started shall not be considered foul and may be picked up and pitched.
- 5.9.8.3. If players believe they have thrown all bags, clear the board for the next round, but then realize they missed one bag, the round ends. Points are scored as if the round ended, and the missed bag is forfeited.
- 5.9.8.4. Any action or intentional use of a penalty that undermines the integrity of the game, as determined by the court official, will result in the player's disqualification and forfeiture of the match.

5.9.9. GAME CLOCK

- 5.9.9.1. The competition manager may limit games to a maximum game clock at their discretion.
- 5.9.9.2. A 30-minute clock is recommended for play. However, if an event has time limitations, a shorter game clock can be implemented. It is not recommended to use a game clock of less than 15 minutes.
- 5.9.9.3. During a team timeout, the game clock should continue to run.
- 5.9.9.4. The official may stop the game clock at their discretion during an extended delay due to weather, injury, or other unforeseen circumstances.

5.9.10. TIMEOUTS

- 5.9.10.1. Each team is permitted one (1) 2-minute timeout per match.
- 5.9.10.2. The team calling the timeout must have possession of play and throw.
- 5.9.10.3. A timeout cannot end the match.
- 5.9.10.4. The official may grant a timeout whenever the circumstances appear to be valid.

5.9.11. COACHING

- 5.9.11.1. Coaches or spectators shall be prohibited from engaging in discussions with any athlete and/or partner once the athlete and/or partner steps onto the field of play area as designated by the program coordinator, except during a timeout.
- 5.9.11.2. If a court official determines a coach is strategically communicating with a player, the official may provide a verbal warning, or citation with unsportsmanlike conduct according to the discretion of the court official.
- 5.9.11.3. Discussions or disputes related to scoring or rules should be directed toward the court official.

5.9.12. DELAY OF GAMES

- 5.9.12.1. If the official believes that the game is intentionally delayed without sufficient or valid reason, the official must issue a warning.

- 5.9.12.2. If the delaying team does not immediately resume play, they will forfeit the match.
- 5.9.12.3. For delays caused by weather, acts of God, civil disorder, or other unforeseen circumstances, the ruling of the competition manager is decisive and final.

5.9.13. MODIFICATIONS / ADAPTIVE DEVICES

- 5.9.13.1. Any assisting device being used for adaptive purposes must not give the athlete a competitive advantage and must be approved by the Competition Director prior to competition.

5.9.14. PROTESTS

- 5.9.14.1. It is the responsibility of each team captain or coach to sign the scorecard after a match. The signatures will indicate the indisputability of the final score. Games in which protests will be filed should not be signed by any captain, or coach who disagrees with the score or its validity.
- 5.9.14.2. Any protest to an official's or competition manager's decision must be made by a Special Olympics certified cornhole coach within 30 minutes of the completion of any game or the decision made by the official or competition manager will be considered as accepted.
- 5.9.14.3. Protests will be acknowledged and judged on the basis of merit in circumstances not specifically provided for herein.

5.9.15. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

- 5.9.15.1. Players shall act in a sportsmanlike manner at all times.
- 5.9.15.2. Any behavior deemed unsportsmanlike, such as using insulting language, attempting to distract an opponent, or displaying inappropriate gestures, actions, or words, may result in disqualification at the discretion of the court official.
- 5.9.15.3. Purposely interfering with an opponent's pitching motion will disqualify a player and result in forfeiture of the match.
- 5.9.15.4. Any action or intentional use of a penalty that undermines the integrity of the game, as determined by the court official, will result in the player's disqualification and forfeiture of the match.

6. UNIFORM RULES

- 6.1. Players will dress in a manner which will bring credit to them and the sport of cornhole.
- 6.2. It is recommended that all players should wear closed-toe athletic shoes.
- 6.3. Uniforms tops must be similar in cut, color, and style for all team members.

7. OFFICIALS

- 7.1. Each cornhole court should have at least one assigned court official. Court officials must be easily identifiable at an event.
- 7.2. Each team has the right to object to a designated official for any reason before the start of a match. The competition manager considers and decides upon this objection.
- 7.3. No member of a team or registered substitute of a team is permitted to assist in officiating a match in which that team is playing.
- 7.4. Captain
 - 7.4.1. On any team, the captain must be designated and made known to the officials before play begins. The captain may not be changed during the course of a game but may be changed during the course of a tournament. The tournament officials must be notified of this change prior to any subsequent games.

8. CORNHOLE QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT



FORMAT: DOUBLES CORNHOLE QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS

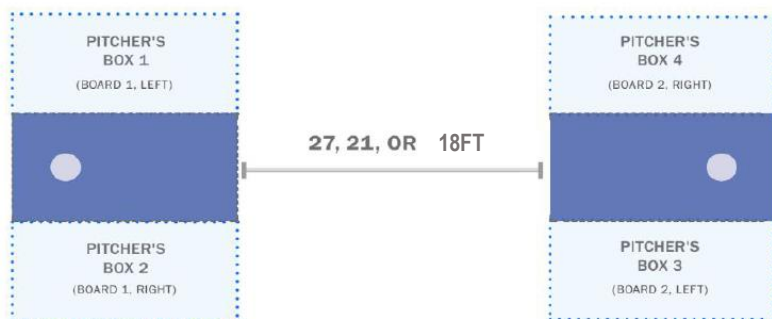


DIRECTIONS

- Athletes attempt 4 tosses from each of the 4 pitcher's boxes, for a total of 16 tosses.
- Record the score value of each bag thrown on the attached scorecard.
- Clear bags after completing tosses in each pitcher's box.
- Sum the score of all 16 tosses to create a total player score for the assessment.
- Sum the score of both players to create a team total score.

COURT LAYOUT

- Refer to the diagram for the proper layout of the cornhole court.
- Either board can be designated as "Board 1" as long as the layout is consistent for all athletes completing the assessment.



SCORING

0 POINTS

Cornhole bag does not come in contact with the board or bounces onto the board.

0.5 POINTS

Cornhole bag hits the board in the air, but does not stay on the board or land in the hole.

1 POINT

Cornhole bag comes to rest on the board.

3 POINTS

Cornhole bag comes to rest in the hole.

TOTAL SCORE

Sum of points scored on 16 throws from assigned distance.

TEAM SCORE

Sum of all scores for all players on the team.

THROWING DISTANCE

- The assessment for doubles play shall begin from a 27-ft. distance from the front of board to front of board.
- If an athlete does not score at least 4 player points on the assessment, they will move to throw from 21-ft.
- Again if the player does not score a minimum of 4 player points at a distance of 21-ft., they will move down to throw from 15-



FORMAT: DOUBLES
CORNHOLE QUALIFICATION
ASSESSMENT SCORECARD



ATHLETE #1 NAME:
ATHLETE #2 OR UNIFIED PARTNER NAME:
COUNTY PROGRAM NAME:

		DISTANCE: 27 FT.		DISTANCE: 21 FT.		DISTANCE: 18 FT.	
		ATHLETE #1	ATHLETE #2 OR UNIFIED PARTNER	ATHLETE #1	ATHLETE #2 OR UNIFIED PARTNER	ATHLETE #1	ATHLETE #2 OR UNIFIED PARTNER
		TOSS NUMBER	SCORE (0, 0.5, 1, 3)	SCORE (0, 0.5, 1, 3)	SCORE (0, 0.5, 1, 3)	SCORE (0, 0.5, 1, 3)	SCORE (0, 0.5, 1, 3)
BOARD 1	1	LEFT SIDE	1				
	2	LEFT SIDE	2				
	3	LEFT SIDE	3				
	4	LEFT SIDE	4				
	5	RIGHT SIDE	1				
	6	RIGHT SIDE	2				
	7	RIGHT SIDE	3				
	8	RIGHT SIDE	4				
BOARD 2	9	LEFT SIDE	1				
	10	LEFT SIDE	2				
	11	LEFT SIDE	3				
	12	LEFT SIDE	4				
	13	RIGHT SIDE	1				
	14	RIGHT SIDE	2				
	15	RIGHT SIDE	3				
	16	RIGHT SIDE	4				
TOTAL SCORE (0-48)							
TEAM SCORE (sum all scores)							

SCORING:	0 POINTS Cornhole bag does not come in contact with the board or bounces onto the board.	0.5 POINTS Cornhole bag hits the board in the air, but does not stay on the board or land in the hole.	1 POINT Cornhole bag comes to rest on the board.	3 POINTS Cornhole bag comes to rest in the hole.	TOTAL SCORE Sum of points scored on 16 throws from assigned distance.
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