

SPORT: SOCCER

GENERAL RULES

Governing Rules

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall govern all Special Olympics football (soccer) competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has developed these rules based upon Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) rules for football (soccer). FIFA rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. For more information, visit www.fifa.com.

2026 Rules Change Summary: None

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

GENERAL RULES	1
1. OFFICIAL EVENTS	1
2. ROSTERS.....	1
3. FACILITY REQUIREMENTS AND EQUIPMENT	2
4. RULES OF COMPETITION	2
5. UNIFORM RULES	5
6. OFFICIALS	5
7. ADDITIONAL SPORTS POLICIES	6

1. OFFICIAL EVENTS

1.1. Five-a-Side Soccer

- 1.2. The playing time of the game shall be 30 minutes. There shall be two equal halves of 15 minutes each with a five-minute interval between halves. Teams must be ready to field a legal team within 10 minutes of the official declaring the game started or the game will be forfeited.

NOTE: Teams must play a minimum of two (documented) games against other Special Olympics teams prior to registration for official competition (unified teams must play unified teams). The team roster must remain the same for the two qualifying games, district competition and State competition. Teams that modify their rosters will forfeit all games. Qualifying games must be played against other teams with an Intent to Play Form on file. **One game must be played against a team from another Agency.** Forfeited games do not count toward the scrimmage requirement.

2. ROSTERS

- 2.1. Each team roster shall consist of a minimum number of five players with a maximum of 12 players. A team must have five players to start a game. Failure to start with five 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.

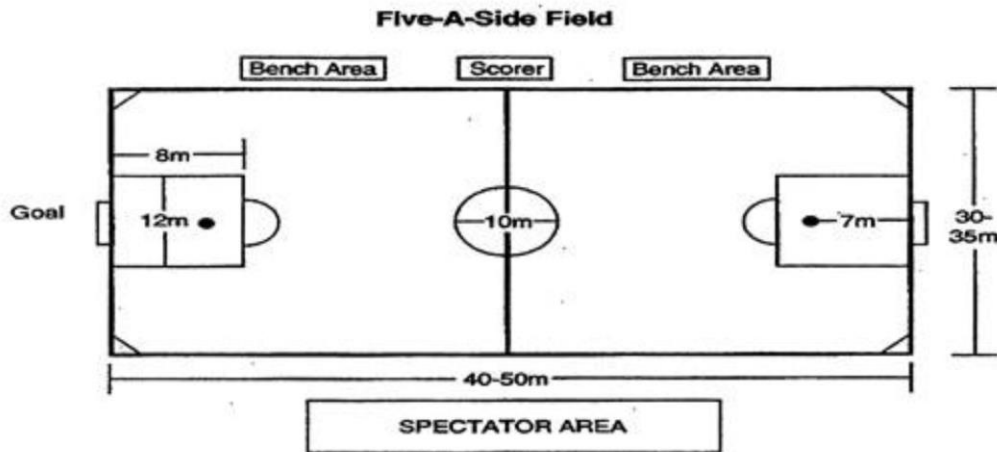
- 2.2. During play, due to injury or player disqualification, a team may play with as few as three players. However, if a team is unable to field at least three players, the game shall be forfeit. At no time can play continue with less than the minimum number of players.
- 2.3. A maximum of three coaches will be allowed on the bench during games.

3. FACILITY REQUIREMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

3.1. Field Dimensions

3.1.1. The size of a five-a-side field is **50m x 35m**.

3.1.2. Both goals shall be of equal size. The area of the goals should be 4m by 2m.



3.2. Equipment - A number five size soccer ball is to be used for SOWI competitions.

4. RULES OF COMPETITION

4.1. Start of Play

- 4.1.1. All players, except the player taking the kick-off, must be in their own half of the field of play.
- 4.1.2. The ball must be stationary on the center mark.
- 4.1.3. The referee gives a signal.
- 4.1.4. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.
- 4.1.5. A goal can be scored directly against the opponent from the kick-off; if the ball directly enters the kicker's goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team.

4.2. Substitutions

4.2.1. Unlimited in number (players may return to the field after being substituted). Substitutions can be made anytime the ball is out of bounds, between periods, after a goal is scored, or during a timeout for an injury. The coach must signal the referee or linesman in order to make a substitution. The player must come to the center line near the scorer's table in order to enter the game as a substitute (the player cannot enter as a substitute directly from the bench area). A substituted player can only come on to the field when given a signal by the referee.

4.3. Time Outs

4.3.1. There are no timeouts (except official due to injury or rules/score clarifications) allowed at any time during competition.

4.4. Ball in and Out of Play

4.4.1. Ball over the sideline results in kick-in

4.4.2. Ball over the end line results in a goal-clearance or a corner kick

4.4.3. The ball must be clearly over the line to be considered out of play.

4.5. Goal Clearance

4.5.1. When the ball passes over the goal line (not in the goal), having last been played by an attacking player, the goalkeeper, standing within his own penalty area, shall throw the ball back into play beyond his own penalty area, but not further than the halfway line (i.e. the ball must touch the ground or another player before crossing the halfway line). The ball shall be deemed in play as soon as it passes outside the penalty area.

4.5.2. The above rules of goal clearance also apply when a goalkeeper gains possession, with his hands, of a ball that is still in play.

4.6. Infringement Penalties

4.6.1. If the ball thrown by the goalkeeper passes beyond the goalkeeper's half of the field without first having been touched by a player or without having touched the ground, the referee shall award an indirect free kick for the opposing team from any point on the halfway line.

4.6.2. If the ball is touched by an opposing player inside the penalty area, from the goalkeeper's throw, the throw shall be retaken.

4.7. Method of Scoring

4.7.1. The whole ball must have completely crossed the line inside the goal to count as a goal.

4.8. Fouls and Misconducts

4.8.1. All Fouls result in an indirect free kick (except penalties kick=direct free kick)

4.8.1.1. If a player is expelled from the game (receives two yellow cards or a red card), this player may not re-enter the game or play the following game. His team must play a player down for two minutes unless a goal is scored before the two minutes have elapsed. In this case the following shall apply:

4.8.1.2. Keeping check of the two minutes shall be the task of the referee.

4.8.1.3. The player who enters the game as a substitute after two minutes may only do so with the consent of the referee and when the ball is out of bounds.

4.8.2. Restart exception:

4.8.2.1. Any free-kick that is awarded to the defending team inside their own penalty area will be restarted with a throw from the goalkeeper.

4.8.3. Free-kick

4.8.3.1. Opposing players must retire at least 5m from the ball for all free kicks.

4.8.3.2. When an indirect free kick is awarded to the attacking team inside the penalty area, within five meters from the goal line, the referee must place the ball at five meters from the goal line.

4.8.4. Penalty Kick

4.8.4.1. Penalty kick is taken from the 7m line. All players except the kicker and the goalkeeper must retire outside the penalty area and arc. The goalkeeper must stand on his/her goal line until the penalty kick is taken.

4.8.5. Kick-In (Equivalent to the throw-in)

4.8.5.1. When the whole ball passes over a sideline, it shall be kicked back into the game from the place where it crossed the line (on the sideline) by a player from the opposing team to that of the player who last touched it. The ball must be stationary before being kicked. It shall be deemed in when the ball is kicked and clearly moves. The ball cannot be played again by the kicker until it has been touched by another player. The players from the opposing team must retire at least 5m from the spot where the kick is being taken.

4.8.5.2. A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick-in unless touched by another player from either team (including the goalie). If the ball goes in the goal without being touched, no goal is allowed.

4.8.5.3. A goalkeeper may not touch the ball with hands receiving it directly from a kick in by a teammate.

4.8.5.4. A goalkeeper may not touch the ball with hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him/her by a teammate. If the pass was made from within the box, the opposing team gets a penalty kick. If the pass was made from outside the box, the opposing team gets a free kick from the spot the pass was made.

4.8.6. Infringement penalties

4.8.6.1. If the player taking the kick-in plays the ball for a second time before it has been touched by another player, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team from the point where the infringement occurred.

4.9. Corner Kick

4.9.1. Is awarded to the attacking team when a player from the defending team kicks the ball over his/her own end line.

4.9.2. Opposing players must retire at least 5m from the ball.

4.10. Coaching from the bench area:

4.10.1. A team bench area will be provided for each team within each area.

4.10.2. Each bench area will be defined by a marked off rectangle, 15m in length, located on the sideline at least 5m away from the sideline and within 10m of the halfway line.

4.10.3. Substitute players and coaches are expected to remain seated within the bench area at all times except when making a substitution.

4.10.4. Coaches are expected to restrict their coaching to simple verbal encouragement. A maximum of three coaches will be allowed on the bench during games.

4.10.5. Coaches must remain within the bench area while coaching.

4.10.6. Verbal abuse of players or officials, or excessive and explicit coaching from the sidelines will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and may result in a warning from the referee. If such behavior persists, the referee may eject the offending coach from the field.

5. UNIFORM RULES

- 5.1. Players with illegal uniforms will not be allowed to play. Players with non-matching uniforms will be penalized accordingly. Legality of a uniform may be determined by the referee or by the event coordinator.
- 5.2. Proper uniforms and uniform numbering will be enforced. Individuals who do not adhere to uniform regulations will not be allowed to enter a game. Uniform tops must have a number on the back a minimum of six inches high – a front number of a minimum of four inches high is optional but numbers are to be in direct contrast to the color of the top. No taped on numbers will be allowed. If there are duplicate numbers, then one player will not be allowed to participate until the issue is rectified. Legal numbers are 1 – 99. An individual may wear leg tights, leotards or sweat pants but they must be the same color of the team's uniform shorts. Athletes wearing improper uniforms will not be allowed to participate.
- 5.3. The basic compulsory equipment of a player shall consist of a jersey or shirt, shorts, stockings, shin-guards and footwear which consists of tennis shoes or soccer shoes with rubber cleats. A player shall not wear anything which is dangerous to another player. Undershirts, if worn, must match the sleeve color of the uniform. Under shorts, if worn, must match the shorts color of the uniform.
- 5.4. Shin-guards, which must be covered entirely by the stockings, shall be made of a suitable material (rubber, plastic, polyurethane or similar substance) and shall afford a reasonable degree of protection.
- 5.5. The goalkeeper shall wear colors which distinguish him from the other players and from the referee. The goalkeeper jersey does not have to have a number associated to the jersey.
- 5.6. Only soccer shoes or tennis shoes are allowed for competition. (For reference, a soccer shoe does not have a toe cleat and has a more limited number of cleats on the bottom.) Baseball or football shoes/cleats are not allowed and a player will not be allowed to participate with these shoes. The toe cleat **cannot** be cut off the baseball or football shoe to conform. The types of cleats, size and number prohibit the use of baseball or football cleats.
- 5.7. Uniform/Equipment Infractions
 - 5.7.1. For any infringement of this law, the player at fault will not be allowed on the field or shall be sent off the field to adjust his equipment and he shall not return without first reporting to the referee, who shall satisfy himself that the player's equipment is in order. The player shall only re-enter the game at a moment when the ball has ceased to be in play.

6. OFFICIALS

- 6.1. Officials shall have full authority to interpret rules. For further questions, the tournament rules committee shall be consulted.
- 6.2. Officials shall have the power to make all decisions on any points not specifically covered in the rules.

7. ADDITIONAL SPORTS POLICIES

- 7.1. **The Soccer Individual Skills Assessment has been moved to the Appendix of the Competition Guide.**