



## TENNIS

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon International Tennis Federation (ITF) Rules for tennis found at <http://www.itftennis.com/abouttheitf/rulesregs/>. ITF or National Governing Body (NGB) rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis or Article I. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis shall apply.

### ***A. Events Offered by Special Olympics Missouri***

1. Individual Skills Competition
2. Singles
3. Doubles
2. Mixed Doubles
2. Unified Sports® Doubles
3. Unified Sports® Mixed Doubles
4. Short Court Tennis

### ***B. Competition Uniforms***

1. All Tennis Players shall wear the MSHSAA approved uniforms.
2. ALL individual skills competitors shall wear any short that conforms to the Competition Uniforms Rules or sweat pants, a T-shirt, tank-top, or sweatshirt, and any footwear that conform to the Competition Uniforms Rules.

### ***C. Short Court Tennis***

1. **Purpose**  
Short Court tennis is designed to prepare athletes for matchplay competition and provide a transition to full court play while slowly introducing the logistics of the game.

2. Short Court tennis is a transition game for athletes who have been successful with Individual Skills Competition and are ready to begin competitive match play, but are not quite ready for a full court game. Short Court tennis is an excellent game to work on footwork, racquet preparation, court movement and the rules of tennis. By downsizing the tennis court boundaries, athletes can be more successful as they work on developing their game in a more compact, non-threatening environment. Adding only one variable at a time allows the athlete to make adjustments more easily.
3. Unified Sports Doubles Short Court tennis is the first transition step from Individual Skills Competition. Small court coverage reduces the movement component, while the Unified tennis partner provides a stroke model for the athlete. The partner also provides encouragement and praise for the athletes on an individual basis.
4. Unified Doubles Short Court tennis may be followed by traditional Short Court doubles (all players are Special Olympics athletes) and by Short Court singles play. This progression provides the athlete a sequential learning opportunity in the components of tennis match play necessary to proceed to full court play.
5. Short Court tennis follows the Rules of the International Tennis Federation (ITF) with the following exceptions:
  - a. Server must stand behind the service line to serve. It will be considered a foot fault if the server steps over the service line prior to contacting the tennis ball.
  - b. Only the service box area is in-bounds.

PTR Speedballs are used, which are larger than regulation-size tennis balls and provide a slower paced game, permitting players to work on strokes and court coverage. As the athlete progresses in skill and court movement, low-compression tennis balls may be used to provide faster ball speed.

## **Universal Sports Rules**

### ***A. Competition Uniforms***

1. General – this does not include sport specific competition uniform rules.

#### **Athletes may wear**

##### Shorts

- Running Shorts
- Basketball Shorts
- Biker Shorts
- Sweatpants
- Jogging Pants

##### Shirts

- T-shirts

#### **Athletes may NOT wear**

##### Shorts

- Denim Slacks or Shorts
- Casual Wear
- Dress Slacks or Shorts
- Tennis Shorts
- Any Pants or Shorts with Buttons and/or Zippers

##### Shirts

- Button-down Casual Shirts

-Tank Tops  
-Sweatshirts

-Golf Shirts  
-Shirts with Collars

Footwear

-Athletic Shoes  
-Tennis Shoes  
-Basketball Shoes  
-Running Shoes  
-Cross-Trainers

Footwear

-Hard-soled Shoes  
-Sandals  
-Hiking Boot Style

2. Athletes may NOT wear medals or ribbons during competition.
3. Athletes may NOT wear any jewelry while competing except Medic Alert necklaces or bracelets. The Medic Alert necklace or bracelet MUST be taped down during competition.

***B. Competition Rules – Team***

2. Any team that forfeits a game due to lack of equipment and/or uniforms shall be disqualified for the remainder of the tournament unless they correct the issue prior to their next game. The team may receive Participation Ribbons, but only if they continue to compete during the remainder of the tournament.
3. If a team forfeits due to lack of players, they may still compete later in that tournament if other athletes from their roster arrive before their next scheduled competition. The team will still be qualified for whatever placements they have earned.
4. If a team is late for a game and thus forfeits, that team shall still be eligible to continue play in the rest of that tournament.
5. Special Olympics Missouri will add a 40+ Age Division in all team sports. A team may have no more than 20% of their roster under the age of 40 to be in this division, and any player under the age of 40 may not be a “dominant player”.
6. All teams MUST attend an area competition as well as a Regional competition in order to be eligible for state competition. In Basketball Teams must, also, compete in Regionals.
7. After Regional competition, teams will be allowed to add one player to their roster if the team has less than 2 substitutes on their roster. The player added to the roster CANNOT have the highest q-score on the team and MUST have competed in a Regional event. It is recommended that the added player come from a team that did not qualify to advance to state however the added player may come from a team that is advancing to state provided that team has more

than 2 substitutes. The added player may NOT change the Age Group or the Gender of the team.

8. Teams may be composed of players from different agencies or even different areas however they must practice together.
9. Teams shall not be allowed to request a specific Regional for any sport. They may request a specific playing date, but only for emergency purposes as determined by the Competition Director.
10. There shall be a minimum of 2 Unified Partners for ALL teams with the exception of Doubles (Bocce, Bowling, and Tennis) and 3-on-3 Basketball. Unified Partners may never exceed the ratio of Athletes to Unified Partners.
11. All coaches are STRONGLY URGED to play all of their athletes equally regardless of their ability for both divisioning and competition.
12. ALL coaches are requested to leave their cell phone numbers at registration during Regional and State Competitions so that they maybe contacted in the event of an emergency or schedule change.
13. Up to 2 Individual Skills Athletes per agency may advance to State competition without participating at Regional competition if they have a valid excuse as determined by the Area Program Staff.
14. Face Painting will NOT be allowed at any Competition Event. Arm, hand, etc. Painting is acceptable but not recommended.
15. Alternates for female teams MUST be female or the team will be divisioned as a Male team.

### ***C. Competition Rules – Individuals***

1. At an event that has more than one sport being competed in, an athlete may participate in only one individual sport and one team sport as long as they have qualified appropriately.
2. Individuals and teams shall be divided based on Sex, Age, and Ability according to the General Rules, however SOMO may combine age groups that are within one age group of each other, or they may cross genders as long as ability levels are within the parameters permitted by SOI standards to allow for more meaningful competition for our athletes. Therefore the minimum number of participants/teams per division will be 2 unless determined to be unfair as deemed by the Games Rules Committee.

## ***D. Universal sports rules***

1. An athlete is not covered by Special Olympics insurance while driving to an event unless the athlete is a certified coach. It is advised that athletes not be allowed to drive to events and that any athlete that does drive to an event shall be made aware of this rule.
2. Coaches' certification requirements can be found in the Coaches Handbook.
3. All Unified Sports® coaches must attend a Unified Sports® training in order to be a certified head coach for a Unified Sports® team.
4. For an athlete to become a Head Coach they must have a 3-year internship with another Head Coach and the Area Program Staff must approve the internship. At the end of the 3-years, both the Head Coach and the Area Program Staff must recommend the athlete. The athlete must abide by the same rules and go through the same training as any other Head Coach. Athletes may not coach and be an athlete in the same sport in the same year nor may they change their status once the season has begun.
5. All Head Coaches must be fully certified for all levels of competition (includes Local, Area, District and State).

Listed below are the levels and requirements of Coaches that Special Olympics Missouri will recognize.

**Bench Coach:** is an individual who has the primary responsibility /job is to be an aid to the coaching staff- Example this can be a High School Student

\*The following course is required to be a Bench Coach

*General Sessions*

**Skills Coach/ Team Skills:** Is an individual who has the primary responsibility of instructing athletes in Individual skills of their sport.

\*The following Courses are required to be an Individual Skills Coach

*General Session*

*Sports Specific Coaches Training*

**Assistant Coach:** Is an individual who has the duties which involve assisting with setting up practice schedules, lesson plans, observing practice and games and etc.

\*The following courses are required to be an Assistant Coach

*General Session*

*Sports Specific Coaches Training*

## *Principles of Coaching*

**Head Coach:** The Special Olympics head coach is responsible for providing athletes with comprehensive sport training and preparation for multilevel sport competition.

- Provide proper planning for each step of training and competition
- Provide and maintain a safe and secure physical environment
- Use acceptable and safe equipment
- Ensure appropriate sport skills instruction and safe competition
- Match athletes according to ability, size and strength Continually assess each athlete for participation in appropriate activities within, not challenged beyond their capabilities
- Inform athletes of inherent risks associated with a specific sport
- Ensure acceptable supervision and maintain an adequate assistant coach-to-athlete ratio
- Provide appropriate medical support at all times
- Maintain accurate records

\*The following courses are required to be a Head Coach

*General Session*

*Sports Specific*

*Principles of Coaching*

*Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)/First Aid (FA)*

6. It is mandatory for ALL sports events to follow the same rules used at the state competition in the same event. This includes but is NOT limited to local, area, and Regional competition.
7. The distance that a team or individual must travel to be allowed overnight accommodation at a Special Olympics Sports event is sixty (60) miles based on the website MapQuest distance and at the discretion of the Area Program Staff/or Regional Director.
8. Sportsmanship Procedures for Event Managers shall be;
  - a. Any athlete/coach/spectator that trash talks and/or uses any un-sportsmanlike behavior shall be warned once. Any official or venue coordinator may give a warning. The warning shall include the entire team. A second offense will result in being dismissed from the game. A dismissal shall only be for one game. Any athlete/coach dismissed from a game shall automatically be remanded to a Code of Conduct review for further disciplinary action regardless of the event.
  - b. ANY abuse or personal attack on any volunteer, to include officials, scorekeepers, timers, line judges or anyone else associated with the event shall be cause for automatic dismissal from the rest of the event and a

Code of Conduct review for further disciplinary action regardless of the event.

- c. Un-sportsmanlike Behavior includes, but is not limited to:
  - 1. Profane language and/or gestures
  - 2. Slamming, throwing or kicking any equipment in any manner deemed unsafe
  - 3. Throwing or kicking or hitting any other object around the playing area, such as chairs, water coolers, etc.
  - 4. Fouling or running into an opponent with undue force
  - 5. Showing undue dismay or criticism of an officials call
  - 6. Showing disrespect in anyway to opponents, teammates or anyone else involved in the event

## 9. Weather Cancellation Guidelines

- a. For Snow and/or Ice
  - 1. If school is cancelled at the location of the event, the event should be cancelled.
  - 2. If the prediction is for 75% chance of snow and/or ice on the last day of the event the remainder of the event should be cancelled.
  - 3. If school has been cancelled at the point of departure to a state event then agencies should stay home. SGA's will be used for future events if this is warranted in the opinion of the Senior Director of Programs.
- b. For Heat
  - 1. If the Heat Index is 105° F or higher then the event should use a heat schedule or be cancelled
- c. For Cold and/or Rain
  - 1. Anytime the temperature is 45°F or lower and there is precipitation of any kind the event should be cancelled.
  - 2. If the Wind Chill is below 35°F or lower the event should be cancelled.
  - 3. If Thunder is heard or lightening has been seen then all participants shall be sent for cover, preferably indoors. This shall be enforced for at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightening seen or until a lightening detector shows it to be safe to resume competition.
  - 4. All participants in a pool, indoor or outdoor shall be removed from the pool following the same guidelines as stated in number 3 above.