

Special Olympics Middle School Unified Sports[®] Soccer Rules

2023

Special Olympics
New Hampshire



The Official Special Olympics Middle School Soccer Sports Rules shall govern all Special Olympics Middle School competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics New Hampshire has created these rules based on the National Federation of State High School Associations' rules, which can be found at <https://www.nfhs.org/soccer-rules-changes-2023-2024>, and Special Olympics International Football Rules found at <https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/sport-rules/Sports-Essentials-Football-Rules-2020-v3.pdf>. These rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the rules listed in this document. In such cases, rules in this document shall apply.

An athlete with Down Syndrome diagnosed with atlantoaxial instability (AAI) may not participate in soccer events.

Events Offered

- Unified Sports 5-a-side Team Competition

Registration

- Players will compete in one event.
- It is recommended a team's roster has a minimum of 10 players, and a maximum of 15 players.

Equipment

- Size five ball (27 to 28 inches circumference).
- No metal studded cleats are allowed.
- Shin guards are required.
- Mouth guards are highly recommended for all players.

Uniform

- All players must wear athletic attire with identifying numbers. No team members may wear the same number.
- The front of the uniform shirt shall have a number at least four inches in height.
- The back of the uniform shirt shall have a number at least six inches in height.
- Team uniform shirts and shorts must be identical in trim color and style.
- No jewelry may be worn. Medical alert necklaces or bracelets are not considered jewelry but must be taped to the body.

Competition

- A game is played between two teams.
- A team shall consist of five players, one of which is the goalie.

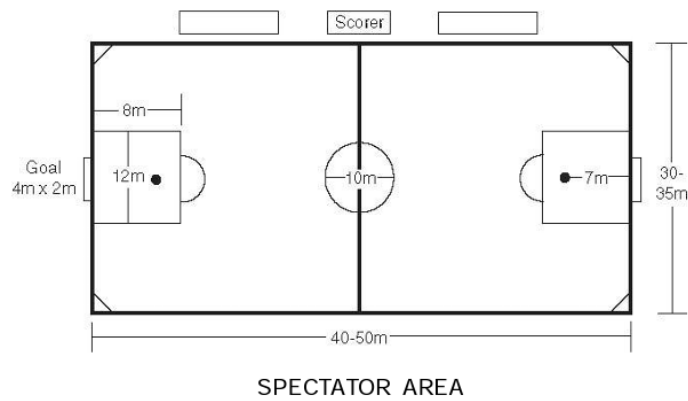
- A team is allowed to play with a maximum of five and a minimum of three players during competition.
- There must be at least two athletes and one Unified Partner on the field.
- The game shall consist of two 15-minute halves with a halftime of five minutes.
- In the event of a tie, two five-minute overtime periods are used.
- No timeouts are permitted except in the case of injury. Substitutions are unlimited (players may return to the field after being substituted). Substitutions can be made any time the ball is out of bounds, between periods, after a goal is scored or during a timeout for an injury.
- Athletes and partners are teammates and are expected to contribute to all facets of the game (dribbling, passing, defending and shooting); however, no player will be permitted to dominate the game.
- Each match is controlled by one referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed.
- The referee should be responsible for keeping the playing time.

Start of Play

- A ball must be kicked forward from the center spot before being touched by another player.
- Prior to the start of each game, a coin flip will determine who receives the ball first.
- A ball must be completely over the side or end line to be determined out of play.
- A ball over the side line will result in a kick in. Ball must be kicked in where it crossed the line. The ball must be stationary before being kicked and cannot be touched by the player “kicking in” until it has been touched by another player. A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick in.
- A ball over the end line will result in a goal kick or corner kick depending on which team is granted possession of the ball.

Field of Play

- The 5-a-side field shall be a rectangle: maximum dimensions of 50 meters by 35 meters, minimum dimensions of 40 meters by 30 meters.
- The field shall be marked out as shown below (see 5-a-side field diagram).
- The goal size must be between a minimum of three meters by two meters and a maximum of four meters by two meters.
- The goal area shall be eight meters by 12 meters. The penalty mark must be at seven meters for goal size of four meters by two meters. The penalty mark must be at six meters for goal size of three meters by two meters.
- The recommended playing surface is grass.



Fouls

- At no time can a player, with the exception of the goalie, use his/her hands during the course of play. Exceptions will be made, at the discretion of the official, for self defense (i.e., protecting the face).
- Any foul incurred during game play shall result in an indirect free kick taken from the spot of the infraction. The most common fouls are tripping, pushing, handball and charging.