

Introduction

What are Unified Sports?

Unified Sports is meant to join people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team to train and compete. This program is dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences. Unified Sport looks to develop **Meaningful Competition**, where coaches work together to create a balanced competitive environment. **Coaches are responsible for ensuring the meaningful involvement of all players in the game.**

Unified Sport is integrated into all our qualifying sports: Soccer, Basketball, Bocce, Floorball, Track & Field and at our School Championships.

Benefits of Unified Sport

- Helps remove barriers and improve accessibility.
- Allows for increased capacity and participation.
- Coach, volunteer development and leadership opportunities.
- Creates greater awareness for people with ID and better integration with their classmates.
- Enhance outreach and engagement with communities.
- Improved quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Develop higher-level sports skills and have new competition experience.
- Participation in their communities and exposure to choices outside Special Olympics.
- Experience meaningful inclusion as each athlete is ensured of playing a valued role on the team.
- Develop mutually rewarding relationships, are recognized as contributors, and are received with acceptance and respect.
- Develop physical, cognitive, and social skills while enhancing confidence and self-esteem.

Additional Unified Sport Components

- Unified Sport Consists of two kinds of Athletes:
 - Special Olympics Athlete – an athlete with an intellectual disability.
 - Unified Sports Partner – an athlete without an intellectual disability.
- Forced line changes (substitutions are required to ensure equal play time for all).
- Unified Partners are **intended to score points, impact the game in a meaningful way** and compete. This includes passing, shooting/scoring and defence. Unified partners should be tasked with defending the opposing unified partner where possible. **Note: Unified athletes are not permitted to take over games but are expected to contribute to winning.**

Unified Floorball

- Each Unified Team will enter a roster with a mix of athletes with and without athletes with intellectual disabilities.
- Throughout the 20-minute game, teams are expected to change their person line every 2 minutes or as time allows.
- Divisioning, games, fouls and penalties, points of emphasis, and tournament format are all unchanged for Unified Floorball.
- The only difference between Unified and Traditional Floorball competition is mandated line changes and an extra player slot.
- Unified Partners and SO athletes are expected to contribute meaningfully to the game.

Team and Players

- Each Unified team will enter a roster of up to 8 athletes: **five Special Olympics Athletes and three Unified Partners** (four starters and four substitutes).
- 4v4 floorball includes three field players plus one goalie. Each team must start the game with four players with **at least three SO athletes** or forfeit the game.

- A maximum of one unified partner on the court at a time is allowed.

Divisioning

- All teams are divided to play teams of similar ability.
 - Coaches will fill out a team ranking assessment at registration and can use our [Skill Assessments](#) as a guide.
- Team rankings and selected classifications are used to establish division.
- Schools are asked to select the level of play of their team to indicate whether their unified partners are playing in a more competitive role for their high-skilled athletes or facilitatory role athletes learning the Sport.

The Game

- 4 players on the court at a time (3 players + 1 goalie)
- The game is played on a gym surface with makeshift boards outlining the court
- Games are 20 minutes long, broken into two 10-minute halves.
 - Includes a 2-minute halftime and a **running clock**.
- Each team may use one 1-minute time out per game.
- A minimum of 4 players is required to play, and teams can have a max of 8.
- There will be no overtime.
- **Teams will not change ends after each period.**
- **Substitutions:** Coaches can make substitutions after any whistle
- Tie breakers are based on the following: succession game points (wins, ties), lowest points against, and random computerized draw.

Competition:

- The game begins with a faceoff at center court.
- If the ball goes out of bounce, **the opposing team will start with the ball in a stationary position** just inside the court where the ball exited the field of play.
- No player, except the goalkeeper, shall stand in the goal crease, on the goal line, nor hold his/her stick in the goal crease.
- After a save, goalies can throw or roll the ball.
- Faceoffs will occur: to start the game/half, each goal, after penalty box infraction, each stoppage of play, off-setting penalties, and if it is inconclusive, who hit the ball out last.
- The team that reaches the first 10 points, or the team with the most points at the end of the 20-minute match, wins the game.
- There will be three categories of penalties: free hits, penalty shots and penalty box minutes. The penalty will be based on the infraction. A list of infractions can be seen on the tech package.
 - **Sticks must remain below the knee when playing the ball and shooting.**
 - **No body contact should occur at any time**

RESOURCES

Unified Page: [SOO Unified](#)

Principal of Meaningful Involvement: [SO Unified Sports Principle of Meaningful Involvement](#)

Unified Sports Coach Guidelines - [Unified Sports Coach Guidelines](#)

Unified Coaching Course - [Unified Coaching Course](#)

Please Note: All other rules of the game will abide by those of traditional Special Olympics School Championship Floorball. This includes out-of-bounds, fouls, penalties, etc.

**Note: For qualification to Provincial School Champions, teams are competing against teams in their conference, which may extend beyond those they compete against at their qualifier. To learn more about the qualifying process, please visit our resources page: [School Programs Resources*](#)*