



# AIA Unified Basketball Sports and Competition Rules



**Special Olympics**  
Arizona





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AIA Unified Basketball is an AIA-sanctioned sport supported by and in conjunction with Special Olympics Arizona (SOAZ) to allow for interscholastic competition between Arizona high schools participating in Unified Sports. Unified Basketball was established to foster inclusion, camaraderie, and the development of meaningful relationships between students with and without intellectual disabilities as high school athletes, teammates, and training partners.

## REGISTRATION TERMINOLOGY

Participants with intellectual disabilities will be registered as “Unified Athletes”. Participants without intellectual disabilities will be registered as “Unified Partners”.

## MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT

Meaningful Involvement ensures that every player is given an opportunity to contribute to the success of his or her team through their unique skills and qualities.

- A. Indicators of Meaningful Involvement
  - i. Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
  - ii. Teammates demonstrate sufficient sports skills and participate according to competition rules
  - iii. Teammates play a valued role on the team and have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team
  - iv. Teammates adjust their skills according to those of other players, resulting in improved performance by team members with lesser ability.
- B. Meaningful Involvement is not achieved when certain team members ...
  - i. Display superior sports skills without involving their teammates.
  - ii. Serve predominantly as on-field coaches rather than teammates or mentors.
  - iii. Control most aspects of the game, especially during the most critical periods.
  - iv. Lower their level of ability dramatically so they do not hurt others or control the entire game.

Coaches are responsible for educating all players about the spirit of AIA Unified Sports – TEAMWORK and the INCLUSION of everyone. **Teams should not include players who dominate play.** Any type of player domination violates the principle of meaningful involvement by greatly limiting other players’ roles and opportunities.

## EQUIPMENT / UNIFORM SPECIFICATIONS

- A. Only a size 6 (girls) basketball with a circumference of 28.5 inches may be used.
- B. Teams must comply with all AIA policies and procedures pertaining to proper attire. Players must wear appropriate athletic attire and shoes. No jewelry may be worn (rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, etc.)
- C. Uniforms must be matching and consist of athletic shorts without pockets and jerseys/shirts with numbers on the front and back, which can be tucked in at the waist.
  - a. *Unified Athletes must wear even numbers, and Unified Partners must wear odd numbers.*

## TEAM COMPOSITION

- A. Each team shall have an adult non-playing coach responsible for the lineup and conduct of the team during competition.
- B. **Teams are required to play all team members during each game** (*exception – injured players*)
- C. Teams will be coed with no limitation on the number of boys or girls on a team.



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- D. Team rosters shall consist of a minimum of 7 players and of no more than 12 active players. For any concerns regarding roster size, please contact **Laura Duncan** at [Laura@SpecialOlympicsArizona.org](mailto:Laura@SpecialOlympicsArizona.org).
- E. During competition, teams must adhere to a 3:2 ratio of Unified Athletes to Unified Partners on the court at all times.
  - a. After a game begins and during competition, only the following lineup ratios are allowed: 3 athletes and 2 partners, 2 athletes and 2 partners, 2 athletes and 1 partner, 1 athlete and 1 partner. Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.
- F. Team rosters should include a proportionate number of Unified Athlete and Unified Partners. In addition to the five players on the court at all times, teams should have a minimum of 1-2 unified athletes and 1-2 unified partners available for substitution throughout the duration of the game.
- G. Unified Basketball teams planning to enter either any AIA tournaments should adhere to the following player selection criteria. These tournaments are considered competitive Unified Sports events. For the safety of everyone involved, all players must meet minimum standards to participate as outlined below:
  - i. Players must be ambulatory (able to walk/run)
  - ii. Players must be able to catch, pass, and shoot the basketball
  - iii. Players must have a basic understanding of dribbling
  - iv. Players must have a basic understanding of general basketball game play rules

## MODIFICATIONS / ADAPTATIONS

### I. Game Structure

- A. Each game will consist of **four quarters** with **6-minute periods**.
  - i. A one minute break will occur between quarters
  - ii. Half-time will be 5 minutes
  - iii. A jump ball will be used at the start of the game and for any overtime periods.
- B. The clock will be a **running clock**, except for the following:
  - i. Time Outs (per game)
    - a. Two (2) 30-second time outs
    - b. Three (3) full (one minute) timeouts
  - ii. Fouls
    - a. All fouls will be called in accordance with NFHS (National Federation of High Schools) basketball sports rules.
  - iii. Official Time Outs
    - a. Example – injured player, clean spill on court, etc.
  - iv. Dead Ball Situations
    - a. **Only when occurring during the last 2 minutes of the each half**
- C. Overtime
  - i. If overtime is necessary, the period is three minutes, running time.
  - ii. During the first 2minutes of overtime, the clock stops **ONLY** on foul shots and timeouts.
  - iii. During the last minute of overtime, the clock stops on all dead ball situations.
  - iv. Each team receives one additional full timeout during the overtime period.
  - v. Time outs earned in previous overtime periods do not carry over in additional overtime period.



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## D. Substitutions

- i. Substitutions may be made any time during time-outs, prior to the beginning of a quarter, or during dead ball situations.
- ii. Substitute players must first report to the scorer, who will then notify the referee. Players must wait for the referee's signal before entering the court.

## II. Competition Rules

A. *THE REFEREE IS THE AUTHORITY ON THE COURT AND WILL CALL ALL VIOLATIONS/FOULS AT HIS/HER DISCRETION. ALL DECISIONS MADE BY OFFICIALS ARE FINAL.*

### B. Violations

#### i. Dribbling / Traveling

- a. A player may be allowed to shuffle his/her feet while holding the ball without changing position on the court.
- b. A player may be allowed to take one extra step when gaining possession of the ball from a dribble or pass.

#### ii. Three Second Lane

- a. A 3-second lane violation will only be called if the referee determines the player has gained an unfair advantage.
- b. The referee will warn the offending player(s) and coach, after which time a violation (change of possession) will be called.

#### iii. Backcourt Pressure

- a. Backcourt pressure is not permitted.
- b. Teams must move their players beyond mid-court and allow the offensive team to advance the ball. Any attempt to guard an offensive player prior to crossing half court will be considered pressing.
- c. Teams will be given two warnings per half. The third warning will result in a technical foul.
- d. **TEN SECOND RULE**
  - A team cannot maintain continuous control of the ball, which is in its designated backcourt, for more than 10 seconds.
  - If a team commits a 10 second violation, possession will be awarded to the opposing team for a throw-in from the designated out-of-bounds spot nearest the violation.

### C. Fouls

- i. There are no adaptations on fouls. All fouls will be called in all divisions.
- ii. When a foul occurs, there will be no free throw attempts. Instead, the following rules will apply:
  - a. Offensive Fouls – the team will lose possession of the ball.
  - b. Defensive Fouls – the offensive team will get 1 point and maintain possession of the ball.
- iii. Personal Fouls
  - a. Players are allowed a maximum of 5 personal fouls before being ejected from the game.
  - b. Fouls for incidental/unintentional contact will only be called if:
    - An advantage was gained toward possession of the ball or position on the court (up to official's discretion)
    - An egregious violation is committed (e.g. overly aggressive pushing, reaching in, etc.)



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## iv. Technical Fouls

- a. Technical fouls will be assessed for: unsportsmanlike conduct by any coach, player, team attendant or follower, AND/OR any third warnings (per half) for back court pressing.
- b. Technical fouls shall result in ball possession for the offended team.
- c. If the foul is flagrant (violent, vulgar, or abusive), the offender is also ejected from the game.

## v. Bonus

- a. After a team commits it's 7th foul in each half, a bonus will be awarded.
- b. The bonus will ALWAYS result in the opposing team earning one point and gaining possession of the ball.

## D. Player Domination

- i. Unified Partners are NOT allowed to control the game by dominating play through excessive scoring, rebounding, blocking, stealing, etc.
- ii. Protocol
  - a. If a coach feels that an opposing team's partner is dominating play, the coach can call a time-out (uncharged) to discuss with the opposing coach.
  - b. If the coaches cannot come to a consensus on if the partner was dominating play, the official shall make the final decision.
  - c. If it is deemed that the partner is in fact dominating play, the official shall sanction the partner and/or coach. Sanctions will include: warning the partner and/or coach, citing the partner and/or coach with unsportsmanlike conduct or removing the partner and/or coach from the game.
- iii. Two warnings will be given for player domination. Upon the third violation, the offender will be ejected from game.

## E. Rules Modifications

- i. ***To ensure meaningful involvement, the following rule modifications may be enforced to prevent player domination –***
  - a. Unified Partners may not score more than 50% of team's total points
  - b. Unified Partners may not block shots made by Unified Athletes
  - c. Unified Partners may not steal the ball from Unified Athletes