



Para athletes with Physical Impairment Classification Fact Sheet

What is Classification?

Classification provides a structure for competition.

Para athletes competing in Paralympic sports have an impairment that leads to a competitive disadvantage in sport. Consequently, a system is in place to minimize the impact of impairments on sport performance and to ensure the success of a Para athlete is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus.

In each Paralympic sport, the process of grouping Para athletes by the degree of activity limitation resulting from the impairment is called “classification”. Through classification, it is determined which Para athletes are eligible to compete in a sport and what class a Para athlete is grouped together for competition. This, to a certain extent, is similar to grouping athletes by age, gender or weight.

Classification is sport-specific because impairment affects the ability to perform in different sports to a different extent. As a consequence, a Para athlete may meet the criteria in one sport but may not meet the criteria in another sport. The class allocated to a Para athlete in one sport will not be the same class allocated in another sport.

Who needs to be classified?

The Paralympic Movement offers sport opportunities for Para athletes with physical, visual and intellectual impairments. All Para athletes wishing to compete in Paralympic Sport will need to be classified to have a sports class specific to that sport.

To be eligible for Paralympic sport an Para athlete must fit into one of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) 10 eligible impairment types. This includes Visual Impairment, Intellectual Impairment and eight different types of Physical Impairment:

- Impaired muscle power
- Impaired passive range of movement
- Loss of limb or limb deficiency
- Leg-length difference
- Short stature
- Hypertonia
- Ataxia
- Athetosis.

When is an Para athlete classified?

Classification takes place before competitions by a panel of classifiers trained in that sport. Para athletes requiring classification will need to arrive at the competition earlier to undergo classification and to be allocated a sport class. During the evaluation process, classifiers follow the Classification Rules of the International Sport Federation.



Levels of Classification

Provisional Classification

Provisional classifications are temporary classifications allocated to a Para athlete and are valid for a limited period of time or until such time the Para athlete can be classified by a classification panel.

Provisional classifications may be allocated to a Para athlete for a specific sport in one of, but not limited to, the following situations:

- At a national event where a classification panel is not available
- As a national entry level for Para athletes new to the sport

Provisional classifications may be allocated by a classifier on receipt of a medical diagnosis form and provisional classification form.

A provisional classification may be subject to change upon classification assessment by the sports specific classification panel.

Para athletes may be eligible for medals but will not be eligible for records.

National Classification

A national classification is a sport specific classification carried out by a trained classification panel. The classification process is the same process administered by the IF and outlined in the section below; How is a Para athlete classified.

A national classification is generally offered at national sport events where medals and records can be allocated to those Para athletes with a national classification.

International Classification

An International Classification is allocated to all Para athletes reporting to an International Competition for the first time.

How is a Para athlete classified?

A Para athlete is classified by a formal evaluation process by trained sport specific classifiers. Classifiers for Para athletes with a physical impairment have a medical or physiotherapy background or are technical experts in their sport.

Prior to classification evaluation a Para athlete must read and sign a consent form

The Para Athlete Evaluation may include, but is not limited to;

- Physical Assessment
- Technical Assessment
- Observation Assessment

The observation assessment takes place during the official training sessions and/or the classification competition period.

There is no cost to a classification



What does an Para athlete need to bring to classification?

- A Para athlete must present to the classification venue at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time
- A Para athlete can be accompanied by one support person; a coach, parent or other.
- Appropriate sports gear must be worn to classification
- Para athletes must bring all equipment and devices as required by the sports classification rules including but not limited to assistive devices, competition and/or daily use wheelchair, competition and/or daily use prostheses and/or orthoses, any other device that they intend to use during the competition
- A medical certificate of diagnosis and recent and relevant medical documentation will be required to verify eligible impairment.

Code of Conduct

Para athlete

All Para athletes will sign a consent form prior to classification to indicate their willingness to be classified and confirm their agreement to provide full cooperation throughout the classification process.

Support Personnel

Para athletes are entitled to have a support person attend classification and on occasion, where appropriate may be asked for information by a classifier. They shall not disrupt the classification process in any way.

Classifier

All classifiers will comply with the Code of Conduct outlined in the International Sport Federation Rules and Regulations.

For further information on classification contact:

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