



Guide to Classification Athletes with Physical Impairment

What is Classification?

Classification provides a structure for competition.

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 an athlete is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus.

In each Paralympic sport, the process of grouping athletes by the degree of activity limitation resulting from the impairment is called “classification”. Through classification, it is determined which athletes are eligible to compete in a sport and what class an 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, an athlete may meet the criteria in one sport, but may not meet the criteria in another sport. The class allocated to an 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 athletes with physical, visual and intellectual impairments. All 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 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 Athlete Classified?

Classification takes place before competitions by a panel of classifiers trained in that sport. 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 an athlete and are valid until such time the athlete can be classified by a classification panel.

Provisional classifications may be allocated to an 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 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.

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 an Athlete Classified.

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

International Classification

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

How is an Athlete Classified?

An athlete is classified by a formal evaluation process by trained sport specific classifiers. Classifiers for athletes with a physical impairment have a (para-) medical background or are technical experts in their sport.

Prior to the commencement of classification evaluation an athlete must read and sign a consent form

The 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 Athlete Need to Bring to Classification?

- An athlete must present to the classification venue at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time
- An athlete can be accompanied by one support person; a coach, parent or other.
- Appropriate sports gear must be worn to classification
- 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

Athlete

All 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

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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