Special Olympics Northern California

Golf

2026 Rules & Guidelines

Unified, Individual and Individual Skills Contest

(Please Review Page 21 for 2026 Rule Changes for Golf)

Special Olympics Northern California

Revised 8/24/26

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SPECIAL OLYMPICS
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide athletic opportunities to children and adults with intellectual disabilities which instill the confidence needed to succeed in life.

"Preparing for life through sports"

SO NORCAL PLAYS BY THE RULES.....

All Special Olympics competitions will be conducted in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules and the National Governing Body of rules for each sport offered in our program. These rules are designed to protect the Athletes, provide equitable conditions of competition and promote uniformity so that no competitor shall obtain an unfair advantage over another.

The International Olympics Committee (IOC), has granted its official recognition to Special Olympics International, Inc. and its accredited programs.

Special Olympics Northern California

COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics Northern California (SONorCal) volunteer coaches are models whose behavior should serve as a positive example for their athletes. Their behavior should reflect a concern that the fairest and most positive competitive experience is equally available to every Special Olympics athlete in each training or competition. The coach has the unique opportunity to influence the development and personal growth of many individuals. For this reason, it is important that the coach adhere to the standards of ethical decision making and teaching. In addition, it is the position of SONorCal that each volunteer coach shall agree to:

HAVE RESPECT FOR OTHERS

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of athletes, other coaches and volunteers, SONorCal staff members, and friends and spectators in Special Olympics.
- I will treat everyone equally regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- I will be a positive role model for the athletes I coach.

ENSURE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

- I will ensure that for each athlete I coach, the time spent with Special Olympics is a positive experience.
- I will respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete.
- I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athlete's ability.
- I will be fair, considerate and honest with athletes and communicate with athletes using simple, clear language.
- I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
- I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of the athlete's ability at all preliminaries/heats and finals in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

ACT PROFESSIONALLY AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS/HER ACTIONS

- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will dress and act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- I will display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in Special Olympics, including to the athletes, other coaches and volunteers, opponents, officials, administrators, SONorCal staff members, parents, spectators and the media.
- I will encourage athletes to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not use any alcohol or tobacco products, vaping products, or cannabis products while representing Special Olympics at training sessions or during competitions.
- I will not engage in any form of personal abuse towards, or inappropriate contact or relationship with, athletes, other coaches and volunteers, SONorCal staff members, family members, or spectators in Special Olympics, including verbal, physical or emotional abuse.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed toward athletes or others in my care.
- I will abide by the Special Olympics policy that prohibits coaches/volunteers from dating athletes.

PROVIDE QUALITY SERVICE TO THE ATHLETES

- I will seek continued improvement through performance evaluation and ongoing coach education.
- I will be knowledgeable about the Sports Rules and skills of the sport(s) I coach.
- I will provide a planned training program.
- I will keep copies of the registration, training, and competition records for each athlete I coach.
- I will follow the Special Olympics and National Governing Body rules for my sport(s) coached, as well as all SONorCal policies and procedures as amended.

ENSURE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE ATHLETES

- I will ensure that the equipment and facilities for my sport(s) coached are safe to use.
- I will ensure that the equipment, rules, training and the environment are appropriate for the age and ability of the athletes.
- I will review each athlete's registration form and be aware of any limitations on that athlete's participation noted on that form.
- I will encourage athletes, coaches and volunteers to seek medical advice when needed.
- I will report any emergencies to the appropriate authorities after first taking immediate action to ensure the safety and well-being of those involved.
- I will maintain the same interest and support towards sick and injured athletes.
- I will allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.

Should the behaviors and/or abilities of any volunteer coach or other faction of a school/organization violate either the principles stated above (including the SONorCal policies and procedures as amended) or the philosophy of the Special Olympics movement, then any of the following actions may be taken by SONorCal in its sole discretion:

1. The coach may be notified by official warning of the undesirable behavior and be requested to remedy the situation immediately in order to continue his or her participation in Special Olympics;
2. The coach may be requested to withdraw personally or with his/her team from the remainder of any Special Olympics event or competition;
3. The coach or sponsoring school/organization may be suspended from participating in any or all Special Olympics activities or events for a specified period of time; and/or
4. The coach or sponsoring school/organization may be permanently prohibited from participating in any or all Special Olympics activities or events.

Special Olympics
Northern California

ATHLETES CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics Northern California (SONorCal) is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all athletes to honor sports and Special Olympics. All SONorCal Athletes and Unified Partners agree to the following code:

SPORTSMANSHIP

- I will practice good sportsmanship.
- I will act in ways that bring respect to me, my coaches, my team, and Special Olympics.
- I will not use bad language.
- I will not swear or insult other persons.
- I will not fight with other athletes, coaches, volunteers, or staff.

TRAINING AND COMPETITION

- I will train regularly.
- I will learn and follow the rules of my sport.
- I will listen to my coaches and the official and ask questions when I do not understand
- I will always try my best during training, divisioning, and competitions.
- I will not "hold back" in preliminary competition just to get into an easier finals competition division.
- I will follow the International Federation and the National Federation/Governing Body rules for my sport(s).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS

- I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.
- I will not use any alcohol or tobacco products, vaping products, or cannabis products while representing Special Olympics at training sessions, competition, or during Games.
- I will not take drugs for the purpose of improving my performance.
- I will obey all laws and Special Olympics rules.
- If I exhibit behavior that violates the code of conduct, I may face disciplinary actions, which could include a warning letter, a suspension, or an expulsion.

Special Olympics
Northern California

PARENT AND SPECTATOR CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics Northern California (SONorCal) is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all parents and spectators to honor sport and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics parents and spectators should observe the following code:

- Remember athletes are participating for their enjoyment. Encourage participation, but do not force it.
- Applaud good performances and efforts from all individuals and teams. Congratulate all participants on their performance, regardless of the event's or game's outcome.
- Focus on the athletes' effort and performance, rather than whether they win or lose.
- Encourage athletes to play according to the rules and to settle disagreements without resorting to hostility or violence.
- Never ridicule or yell at participants for making a mistake or losing the competition.
- Remember that athletes learn best by example. Appreciate good performance and skillful plays by all participants.
- Respect the decisions of officials, Games Management Team and Staff, and teach athletes to do the same.
- Show appreciation for event volunteers, coaches, and officials and staff. (Remember, without them there would be no opportunities for athletes).
- Condemn the use of violence in any form, whether it is by spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- Show respect for your team's or individual's opponents. Without them, there would be no event or game.
- Encourage athletes and coaches to follow the rules and the officials' decisions.
- Swearing and/or inappropriate language will not be tolerated at SONorCal events
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- Abide by all posted and written policies, including SONorCal's Animal Policy for Practices, Competitions and Events.

By attending an event, parents and spectators have agreed to abide by this Parent and Spectator Code of Conduct. SONorCal reserves the right to dismiss parents and/or spectators from any SO NorCal event for violation of this Parent and Spectator Code of Conduct.

SONORCAL GOLF RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Official Special Olympics Rules shall govern all Special Olympics Golf competitions. As an International sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon The Rules of Golf as approved by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews (R&A) and the United States Golf Association (USGA). These rules shall govern all competition except when in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall apply.

SECTION A - GENERAL RULES

1. Each Special Olympics athlete is required to have a current Application for Participation on file in order to participate. Also, each Unified Partner must have a current Unified Partner Application and Release Form on file in order to participate. This is in accordance with the Special Olympics General Rules.
2. Each individual stroke-play athlete and alternate shot team are required to play and submit at least 36 holes of golf prior to Regional Competition registration due date in order to be able to participate in the Regional Competition. Any Individual Skills Contest athlete who meets the general requirements and has demonstrated safe handling of golf clubs can participate in the Individual Skills Contest.
3. All athletes and Unified Partners *should* put an identifying mark on the ball to be played.
4. Rangefinders are allowed for competition as long as the slope rating feature is disabled.
5. All athletes and Unified Partners are required to walk the course. Exceptions: Golf carts may be used at events for medical reasons as well as any safety issues (i.e., extreme heat or fatigue). Also, carts may be used for golf bags and the scorekeepers. Athletes and partners may also utilize the carts from the green to tee in the case of extreme distances between green and tee. Final decisions for golf cart requests will be made by the golf committee at each competition. **Please see Appendix B for the SONorCal Golf Cart Driver Policy.**
6. SONorCal has a strict Animal Policy for Practices, Competitions and Events, which must be followed by all athletes, volunteers, parents and spectators at all times. Please visit sonc.org/resources/coach-athletes-resources for the full policy.

SECTION B - OFFICIAL EVENTS

1. Level 1 Individual Skills Contest (ISC)
2. Level 2 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play – team scoring average must be 68 or lower.
3. Level 3 Not offered.
4. Level 4 9-Hole Individual Stroke Play – golfer's scoring average must be 68 or lower.
5. Level 5 18-Hole Individual Stroke Play – golfer's scoring average must be 120 or lower.

SECTION C - DIVISIONS

1. Competitors in Level 1, 4 and 5 will compete in one of five age groups:
   a. Ages 8-11
   b. Ages 12-15
   c. Ages 16-21
   d. Ages 22-29
   e. Ages 30 and up
   *Age Groups may be combined due to low numbers and equal ability.
2. Competitors in Level 2 (Alternate Shot Unified Play) will compete in an Open Age Group. The following Gender-Based Divisions will be used:
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Co-ed

SECTION D - COACHES AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Coaches are responsible for knowing and understanding the rules of the game, not only the modified rules in this manual, but also the International Rules of the game. The National Governing Body of rules for Special Olympics Golf is The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews (R&A) and the United States Golf Association (USGA). To acquire your own USGA Rules Book, or download the free USGA Rules Application ("App") for your iPhone or Android device, follow the link below:

   http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub.html

2. **During on-course training and competition, coaches are not allowed to provide on-course coaching to athletes participating in any level of on-course play, including 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play (Level 2), 9-Hole Individual Stroke Play (Level 4) and 18-Hole Individual Stroke Play (Level 5). Such instruction/coaching shall be limited only to the driving range, practice greens or practice holes. Only during 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play may the assigned Unified Partner provide on-course instruction/coaching to the assigned athlete.**

SECTION E - ATHLETES, UNIFIED PARTNERS AND CADDIES AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES (LEVELS 2, 4 & 5)

1. Athletes, Unified Partners and Caddies are responsible for keeping track of their score while on course. Official scorekeepers, if utilized at a competition, will write down the official score, after verifying with teams or individuals.
   a. In the case that no official scorekeepers are available, the Competition Director will pre-assign one Caddie/Unified Partner from each group to record the score of each ball played at the end of each hole. All parties must agree on the score prior to advancing to the next hole.
2. Athletes, Unified Partners and Caddies are responsible for playing at a proper pace of play and must be "in position," as defined below:
   a. Per USGA guidelines, a group (Individual Athletes or Unified Teams) is out of position if it (a) is taking more than the allotted time to play (an average of 18 minutes per hole) and (b) reaches the teeing ground of a par-3 hole and the preceding group has cleared the next tee; reaches the teeing ground of a par-4 hole and the putting green is clear; or reaches the teeing ground of a par-5 hole when the preceding group is on the putting green. Both (a) and (b) must apply for a group to be out of position.
   b. An Athlete or Unified Team that is out of position will be given a warning and placed on a clock for subsequent holes (1st violation). If an Athlete or Unified Team is found to be out of position on a subsequent hole, a one-stroke penalty will be issued (2nd violation). If an Athlete or Unified Team is found to be out of position again, a two-stroke penalty will be issued (3rd violation). If an Athlete or Unified Team is found to be out of position again, a disqualification from the competition will be issued (4th violation).

SECTION F - OFFICIALS AND THEIR DUTIES

1. The golf committee will determine any rule interpretation and/or protest according to R&A and the USGA.

SECTION G - UNIFORMS / ATTIRE

1. All male players must wear collared Shirts. No exceptions!
2. Female athletes may wear shirts without collars, but no t-shirts with screen printed logos.
3. NO JEANS or gym shorts may be worn.
4. Golf shoes are recommended (spike less golf shoes or appropriate sneakers). Soft-sole spikes only. No metal spikes.

SECTION H - GOLF COURSE SET UP (LEVELS 2, 4 & 5)

1. The golf course shall be set up at the discretion of the tournament committee.
2. The following criteria shall be used in determining teeing ground locations and hole distances:
   a. Avoid carry of greater than 50 yards over hazards or other obstacles.
   b. Using existing tee locations with the following recommended distances:
      i. Par 3 – 150 yards
      ii. Par 4 – 350 yards
      iii. Par 5 – 475 yards
   c. Distinct teeing grounds will be determined for both men and women. These teeing grounds may vary between tournaments, based on the venue.

SECTION I - EQUIPMENT

1. All players are responsible for providing their own equipment.
   a. Minimum equipment required:
      i. Set of golf clubs (shall include at least one wood, one iron and one putter).
      ii. A golf bag.
      iii. Golf balls.
      iv. Golf tees.

SECTION J - RULES OF COMPETITION (LEVELS 2, 4 & 5)

Level 2: 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play

1. Unified Team: A unified team shall include one Special Olympics athlete and an athlete without an intellectual disability (Unified Partner).

2. Each Alternate Shot Team is required to play at least 36 holes of golf together prior to the Regional Competition registration due date in order to participate in the Regional Competition.

3. Level 2 is designed to give the Special Olympics athlete an opportunity to transition from ISC to individual play and progress under the guidance of a partner whose ability and knowledge of golf is more advanced than that of the Special Olympics athlete. As a result, Level 2 does not function in the traditional Unified Sports model where teammates are expected to be of similar ability.

4. The Unified Partner serves as a coach and mentor so that the Special Olympics athlete golfer becomes self sufficient on the golf course. Unified Partners should be capable of playing independently at the Regional Competition.

5. Qualifying for Level 2: 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play
   a. Teams must have a Level 2 scoring average of 68 or below to participate at this level and must count all strokes and NOT use the double-par scoring method that is used in competition.
   b. It is required that the Special Olympics Athlete and Unified Partner each record a minimum score in a supervised Individual Skills Contest (ISC), according to the following:
      i. Score a total of at least 54 points; AND
      ii. Score a minimum of 18 combined points in each of the following sets of ISC Events:
         1. Event #1 – Short Putt & Event #2 – Long Putt
         2. Event #3 – Chip Shot & Event #4 – Pitch Shot
         3. Event #5 – Iron Shot & Event #6 – Wood Shot
      iii. An ISC Scorecard for each the Athlete and the Unified Partner must be submitted along with the Competition Entry Form (Registration). See Page 17 for the ISC Scorecard.
   c. If either the Athlete or Unified Partner participated as part of any Alternate Shot team that scored more than 68 at the previous year's Regional Competition, or they are a new Athlete or Unified Partner, they must meet all requirements

set forth in b, i-iii above, in order to register for Level 2 play. SONorCal will provide and coaches must review, previous year's scores for the Alternate Shot Unified Pair. Competition Directors will review and confirm, during competition registration, that ALL qualification standards are met.

d. If the Athlete and Unified Partner participated on any Alternate Shot team that scored 68 or under at the previous year's Regional Competition, neither needs to complete a new Individual Skills Contest assessment.
e. A Unified team must have played at least 36 holes with one another. This can be done in any combination of rounds as long as the total number of holes is at least 36 (a combination of 9-hole rounds and/or 6-hole rounds). Holes played on a Par 3 course or Executive course do not count as part of the required number of holes.
f. Both Special Olympics athletes and Unified Partners must have the knowledge and ability to apply the rules of the etiquette of golf.

6. How Level 2: 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified is Played & Scored at Competitions
   a. The Unified Partner and Special Olympics athlete alternate each stroke (using the same ball) from the tee shot until the ball is holed or a score of double-par ("Maximum Score") is reached. If the Maximum Score is reached without holing the shot, the team shall record a score of "#x" and proceed to the next hole. Competition scores will be the number of strokes plus all "x" scores. (e.g. Team A scores 60 and has 4 "x" scores for a Final Score of 64. Team B scores 60 and has 2 "x" scores for a Final Score of 62. Team B is awarded the higher award.)
   b. The Special Olympics Athlete will always tee off on five (5) holes, while the Unified Partner will tee off on four (4) holes. The holes from which each participant will tee off will be assigned prior to the competition at the discretion of the Competition Director, and teams may not necessarily tee off in alternating order.
   c. Only one ball is in play per team throughout the competition. A stipulated round shall be 9 holes.
   d. If a participant whiffs and hits out of turn, the ball will be placed at the original spot and the whiff will be counted as a stroke.
   e. Ties shall be decided in the following manner:
      i. Of the teams tied within a division, the team with the fewest number of "#x's" shall receive higher placement.
      ii. If teams remain tied (have the same number of "#x's") they shall be presented with the same award, and subsequent places shall be skipped.

Level 4: 9-Hole Individual Stroke Play

1. Level 4 is designed to meet the needs of those Special Olympics athlete golfers who wish to play individually in a tournament where the stipulated round is nine holes.

2. Each 9-Hole Individual Stroke Play Athlete is required to play at least 36 holes of golf prior to the Regional Competition registration due date in order to participate in the Regional Competition.

3. The player should be capable of playing independently at the Regional Competition.

4. One caddie is required for every player. The caddie must be a background-cleared volunteer with a current application on file and shall be assigned by the athlete's delegation. See Addendum A for USGA Rules for caddie responsibilities and limitations.

5. Qualifying for Level 4: 9-Hole Individual Stroke Play
   a. Athletes must have a Level 4 scoring average of 68 or below to participate at this level and must count all strokes and NOT use the double-par scoring method that is used in competition.
   b. Athletes should have competed in a Level 2 (9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play) division in a Regional Tournament in prior years to qualify for 9-Hole Individual Stroke play. SONorCal will provide and coaches must review, previous year's scores for the athlete. Competition Directors will review and confirm, during competition registration, that ALL qualification standards are met.
   c. An athlete must have played at least 36 holes. This can be done in any combination of rounds as long as the total number of holes is at least 36 (a combination of 9-hole rounds and/or 6-hole rounds). Holes played on a Par 3 course or Executive course do not count as part of the required number of holes.
   d. Special Olympics athletes must have the knowledge and ability to apply the rules of the etiquette of golf.

6. How Level 4: 9-Hole Individual Stroke is Played & Scored at Competitions
   a. The form of play for Level 4 shall be stroke-play competition. A stipulated round shall be 9 holes.
   b. If a score of double-par ("Maximum Score") is reached without holing the shot, the player shall record a score of "#x" and proceed to the next hole. Competition scores will be the number of strokes plus all "x" scores. (e.g. Athlete A scores 60 and has 4 "x" scores for a Final Score of 64. Athlete B scores 60 and has 2 "x" scores for a Final Score of 62. Athlete B is awarded the higher award.)
   c. Players are required to review scorecards after each hole, to remedy any miscounts or discrepancies.
   d. Ties shall be decided in the following manner:
      i. Of the players tied within a division, the player with the fewest number of "#x's" shall receive higher placement.
      ii. If players remain tied (have the same number of "#x's") they shall be presented with the same award, and subsequent places shall be skipped.

Level 5: 18-Hole Individual Stroke Play

1. Level 5 is designed to meet the needs of those Special Olympics athlete golfers who wish to play individually in a tournament where the stipulated round is eighteen holes.

2. Each 18-Hole Individual Stroke Play Athlete is required to play at least 36 holes of golf prior to the Regional Competition registration due date in order to participate in the Regional Competition.

3. The player should be capable of playing independently at the Regional Competition.

4. One caddie is required for every player. The caddie must be a background-cleared volunteer with a current application on file and shall be assigned by the athlete's delegation. See Addendum A for USGA Rules for caddie responsibilities and limitations.

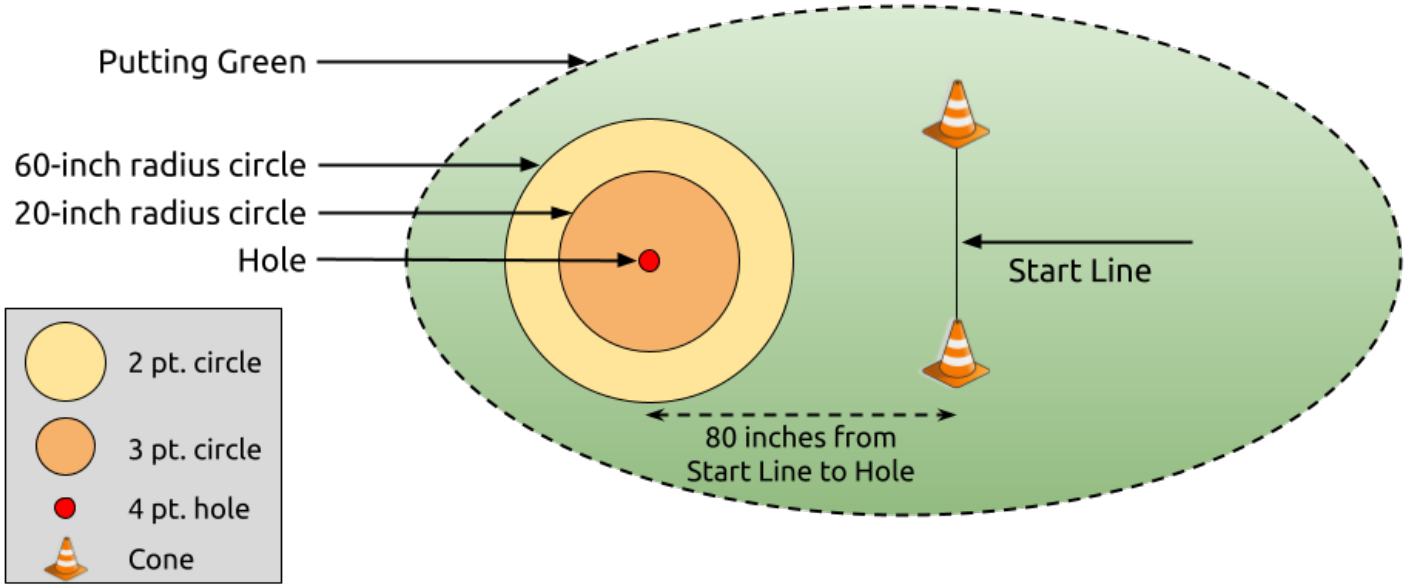
5. Qualifying for Level 5: 18-Hole Individual Stroke Play
   a. Athletes must have a Level 5 scoring average of 120 or below to participate at this level and must count all strokes and NOT use the double-par scoring method that is used in competition.
   b. Athletes should have competed in a Level 4 (9-Hole Individual Stroke Play) division in a Regional Tournament in prior years to qualify for 18-Hole Individual Stroke play. SONorCal will provide and coaches must review, previous year's scores for the athlete. Competition Directors will review and confirm, during competition registration, that ALL qualification standards are met.
   f. An athlete must have played at least 36 holes. This can be done in any combination of rounds as long as the total number of holes is at least 36 (a combination of 9-hole rounds and/or 6-hole rounds). Holes played on a Par 3 course or Executive course do not count as part of the required number of holes.
   c. Special Olympics athletes must have the knowledge and ability to apply the rules of the etiquette of golf.

6. How Level 5: 18-Hole Individual Stroke is Played & Scored at Competitions
   a. The form of play for Level 5 shall be stroke-play competition. A stipulated round shall be 18 holes.
   b. If a score of double-par ("Maximum Score") is reached without holing the shot, the player shall record a score of "#x" and proceed to the next hole. Competition scores will be the number of strokes plus all "x" scores. (e.g. Athlete A scores 116 and has 4 "x" scores for a Final Score of 120. Athlete B scores 114 and has 2 "x" scores for a Final Score of 116. Athlete B is awarded the higher award.)
   c. Players are required to review scorecards after each hole, to remedy any miscounts or discrepancies.
   d. Ties shall be decided in the following manner:
      i. Of the players tied within a division, the player with the fewest number of "#x's" shall receive higher placement.
      iii. If players remain tied (have the same number of "#x's") they shall be presented with the same award, and subsequent places shall be skipped.

SECTION K – INDIVIDUAL SKILLS CONTEST (ISC)

1. The following events provide meaningful competition for athletes with lower ability levels. The Individual Skills Contest allows athletes to train and compete in basic golf skills. The development of these key skills is necessary prior to advancing to Level 2: 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play.
2. Athletes who receive assistance in the portion of the event that determines the score will receive a "Non Score" for the event. Athletes who score "Non Score" in all of the events will only be eligible for a Participation award. In order to receive a placement award (Gold through 8th Place), athletes must perform at least one of the events below without receiving assistance in the portion of the event that determines the score (see specific events for details).
3. The Individual Skills Contest is comprised of six events: Short Putt, Long Putt, Chip Shot, Pitch Shot, and Iron Shot & Wood Shot.
4. Athletes will be pre-divisioned according to their total scores from these six events as well as gender and age group.
5. A maximum of 120 points may be scored in the Individual Skills Contest. Any athlete who meets the general requirements and has demonstrated safe handling of golf clubs can participate in the skills competition.

ISC Event #1: Short Putt



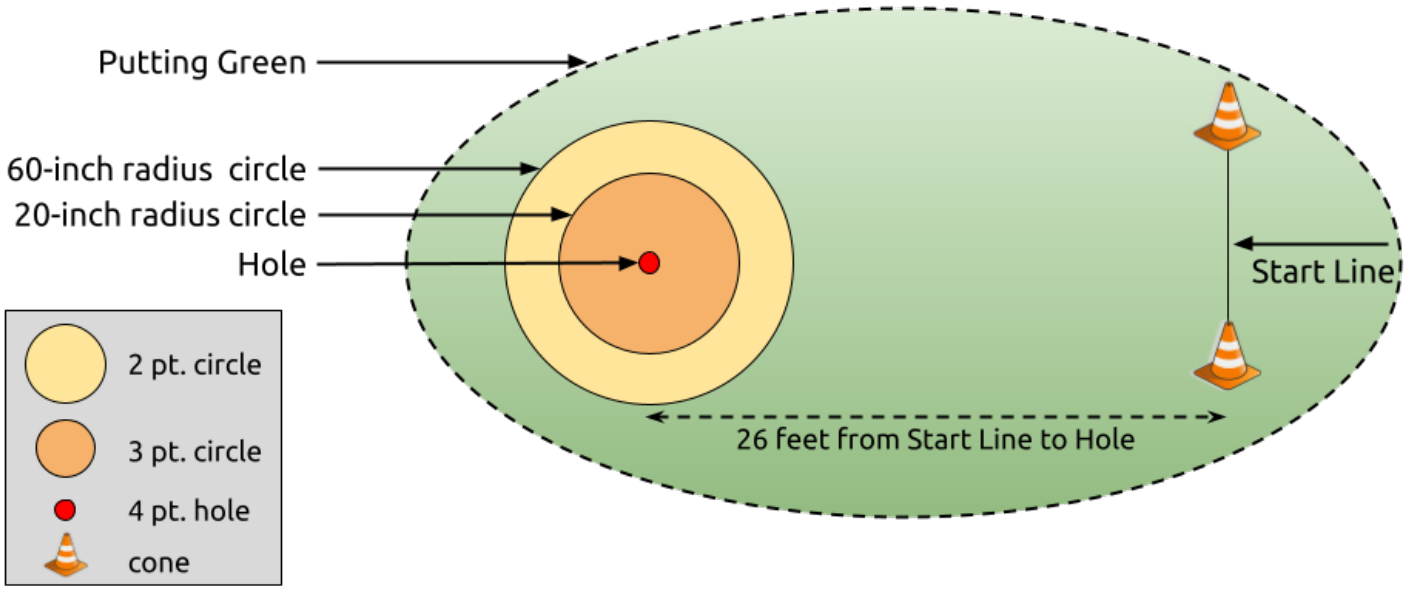
1. Purpose: To measure the athlete's ability to putt a short distance.

2. Equipment
   a. Regulation putting green with a properly marked (targeted) hole.
   b. One putter for each athlete.
   c. 5 golf balls for each athlete.
   d. Cones, chalk/paint or tees and string/tape to mark Start Line and target circles around the hole.

3. Description (see ISC Event #1: Short Putt diagram above)
   a. A target hole is selected and two circles are placed around the hole. The first circle shall have a radius of 20 inches and the second shall have a radius of 60 inches from the hole.
   b. The athlete will have five attempts from a clearly marked Start Line, 80 inches from the hole.
   c. The short putt should be set up on a green with as flat a surface as possible.
   d. The flag/pin will be removed during the Short Putt event. However, it may be tended by a coach/volunteer if requested by the athlete. If tended, the flag/pin must be removed as the ball approaches the hole.

4. Scoring
   a. The athlete will have five attempts to putt the ball at the hole from a line 2 meters from the hole, scoring points according to where the ball comes to rest.
   b. The athlete will score 1 point for making a stroke (contact with the ball). A swing and a miss counts as an attempt and as a result the athlete will receive a score of "0" for that attempt.
   c. The athlete will score 2 points if the ball stops on or within the 60-inch circle.
   d. The athlete will score 3 points if the ball stops on or within the 20-inch circle.
   e. The athlete will score 4 points if the ball goes in the hole.
   f. The Short Putt score shall be the sum total of the five attempts.
   g. The maximum score that can be attained is 20. The minimum score is zero.
   h. If the athlete receives assistance swinging, or otherwise moving the club in a forward motion, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

ISC Event #2: Long Putt



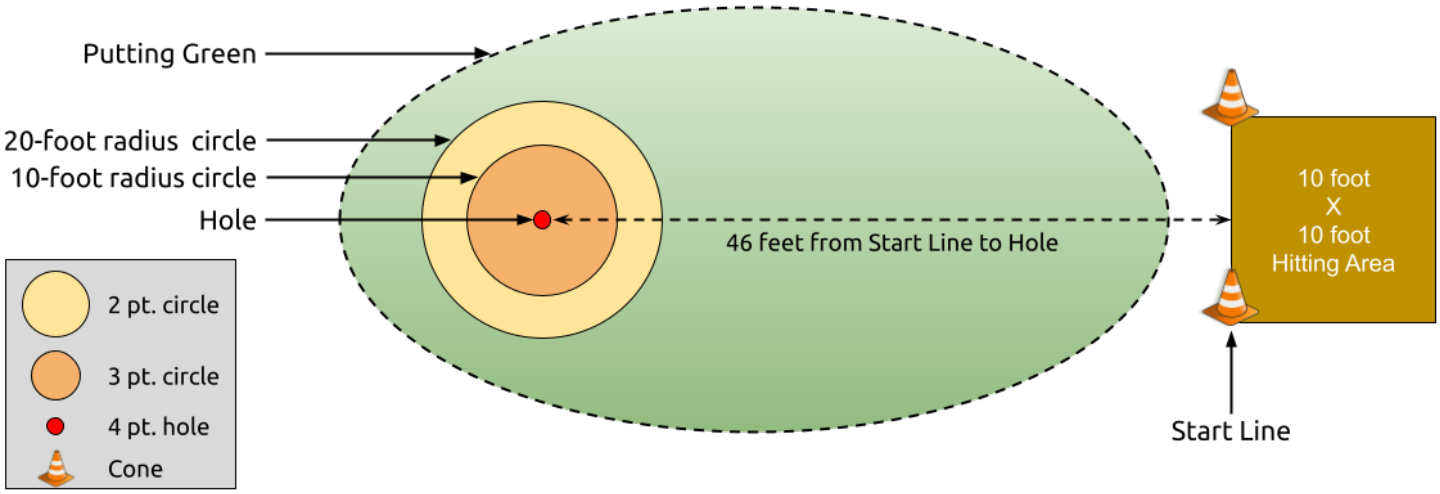
1. Purpose: To measure the athlete's ability to putt a long distance.

2. Equipment
   a. Regulation putting green with a properly marked (targeted) hole.
   b. One putter for each athlete.
   c. 5 golf balls for each athlete.
   d. Cones, chalk/paint or tees and string/tape to mark Start Line and target circles around the hole.

3. Description (see ISC Event #2: Long Putt diagram above)
   i. A target hole is selected and two circles are placed around the hole. The first circle shall have a radius of 20 inches and the second shall have a radius of 60 inches from the hole.
   j. The athlete will have five attempts from a clearly marked Start Line, 26 feet from the hole.
   a. The short putt should be set up on a green with as flat a surface as possible. If the surface is not flat, putting uphill is recommended.
   b. The flag/pin will be removed during the Long Putt event. However, it may be tended by a coach/volunteer if requested by the athlete. If tended, the flag/pin must be removed as the ball approaches the hole.

4. Scoring
   a. The athlete will have five attempts to putt the ball at the hole from a line 8 meters from the hole, scoring points according to where the ball comes to rest.
   b. The athlete will score 1 point for making a stroke (contact with the ball). A swing and a miss counts as an attempt and as a result the athlete will receive a score of "0" for that attempt.
   c. The athlete will score 2 points if the ball stops on or within the 60-inch circle.
   d. The athlete will score 3 points if the ball stops on or within the 20-inch circle.
   e. The athlete will score 4 points if the ball goes in the hole.
   f. The Long Putt score shall be the sum total of the five attempts.
   g. The maximum score that can be attained is 20. The minimum score is zero.
   h. If the athlete receives assistance swinging, or otherwise moving the club in a forward motion, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

ISC Event #3: Chip Shot



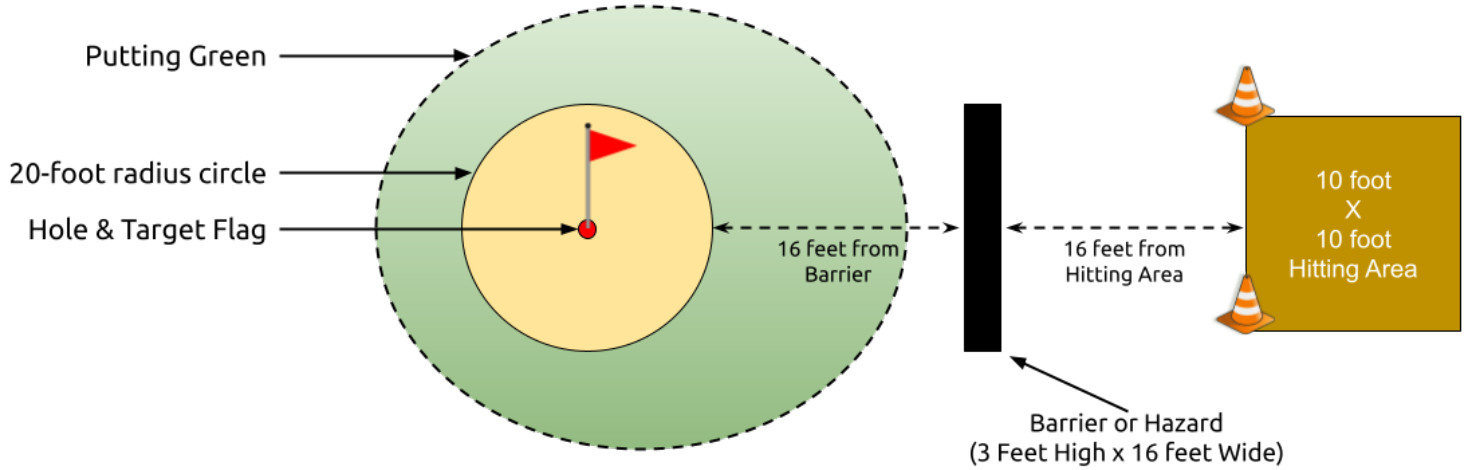
1. Purpose: To measure the athlete's ability in hitting chip shots 14 meters from the hole.

2. Equipment
   a. Assorted irons for both right and left handed players (note: woods and putters are not permitted for this skill).
   b. 5 golf balls for each athlete.
   c. A putting green with a clearly marked target flag at the hole.
   d. Cones, chalk/paint or tees and string/tape to mark a 10-foot by 10-foot hitting area.
   e. Chalk/paint, or tees and string/tape to mark target circles around the hole.

3. Description (see ISC Event #3: Chip Shot diagram above)
   a. A chipping area is set up which includes a 10-foot by 10-foot square hitting area located 46 feet from the hole.
   b. A 20-foot radius circle and a 10-foot radius circle will be placed around the hole. Size of target circles may vary due to venue limitations.
   c. Ball must be placed and hit from the grass (hitting area) and cannot be hit off a tee.
   d. The athlete is instructed to chip the ball at a designated hole getting it as close to the hole as possible.
   e. The flag/pin must stay in for each attempt.

4. Scoring
   a. The athlete will attempt five shots at the target, scoring points according to where the ball comes to rest.
   b. The athlete will score 1 point for making a stroke (contact with the ball). A swing and a miss counts as an attempt and as a result the athlete will receive a score of "0" for that attempt.
   c. The athlete will score 2 points if the chipped ball comes to rest inside the 20-foot circle.
   d. The athlete will score 3 points if the chipped ball comes to rest inside the 10-foot circle.
   e. The athlete will score 4 points if the chipped ball comes to rest in the hole.
   f. The sum total from the five attempts will be the athlete's final score for the chip shot.
   g. The maximum score that can be attained is 20. The minimum score is zero.
   h. If the athlete receives assistance swinging, or otherwise moving the club in a forward motion, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

ISC Event #4: Pitch Shot



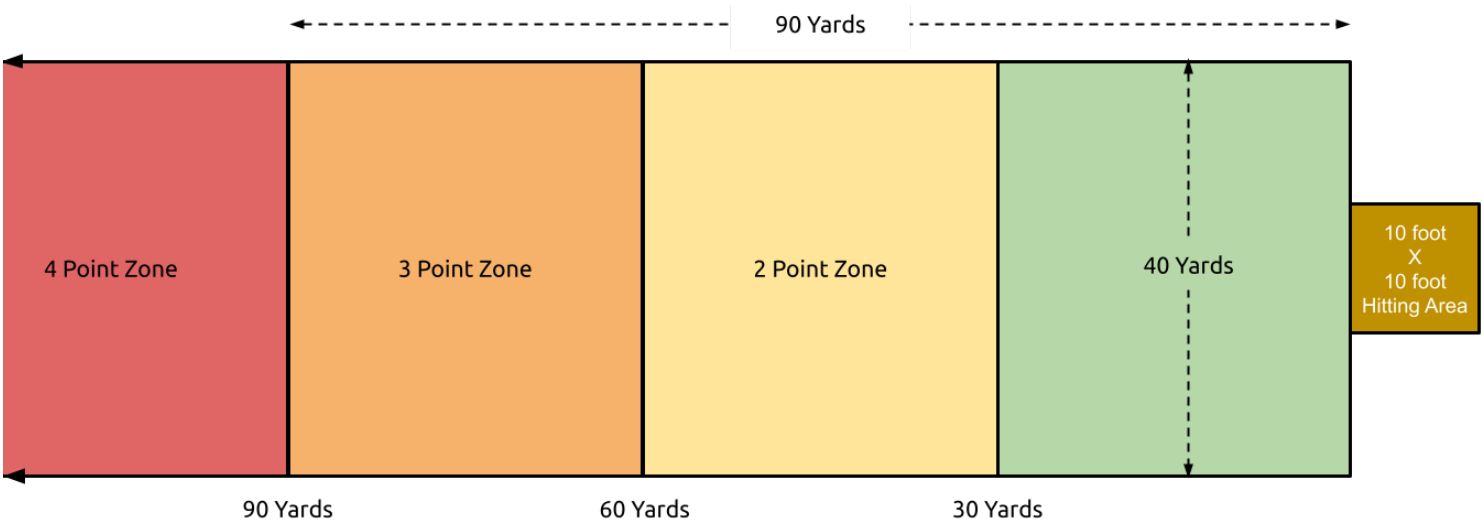
1. Purpose: To measure the athlete's ability in hitting controlled pitch shots in the air in the proper direction to a defined circular target area. This skill may also be set up over a hazard (sand trap or hill).

2. Equipment
   a. Assorted pitching irons for both right and left handed players (note: woods and putters are not permitted for this skill).
   b. 5 golf balls for each athlete.
   c. A putting green with a clearly marked target flag.
   d. Banner, sign, net or barrier that measures 3-feet high by 16-feet wide.
   e. Cones, chalk/paint or tees and string/tape to mark a 10-foot by 10-foot hitting area.
   f. Chalk/paint, or tees and string/tape to mark target circle around the hole.

3. Description (see ISC Event #4: Pitch Shot diagram above)
   a. A target area shall be defined as a circle with a 20-foot radius.
   b. The distance from the hitting area to the barrier shall be 16 feet.
   c. The distance from the barrier to the target area shall be 16 feet.
   d. The athlete shall make five attempts. The athlete is instructed to pitch the ball over the barrier aiming at the designated target area.
   e. Size of target circle may vary due to venue limitations.
   f. Ball must be placed and hit from the grass (hitting area) and cannot be hit off a tee.
   g. This skill should be located in a restricted area such as a range in order to provide the safest environment. If an unrestricted area is used than the area should be roped off and clearly identified for volunteers, spectators and athletes.
   h. The flag/pin must stay in for each attempt.

4. Scoring
   a. The athlete will attempt five shots at the target, scoring points according to where the ball lands.
   b. The athlete will score 1 point for making a stroke (contact with the ball). A swing-and-miss counts as an attempt and as a result the athlete will receive a score of "0" for that attempt.
   c. The athlete will score 2 points if the ball goes over the barrier (cannot be outside of the designated 16-feet width).
   d. The athlete will score 3 points if the ball lands inside the target circle and rolls out or if the ball lands outside the target circle and comes to rest inside the circle.
   e. The athlete will score 4 points if the ball lands inside the target circle and comes to rest inside the circle.
   f. The sum total from five attempts will be the athlete's final score for the pitch shot.
   g. The maximum score that can be attained is 20. The minimum score is zero.
   h. If the athlete receives assistance swinging, or otherwise moving the club in a forward motion, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

ISC Event #5: Iron Shot



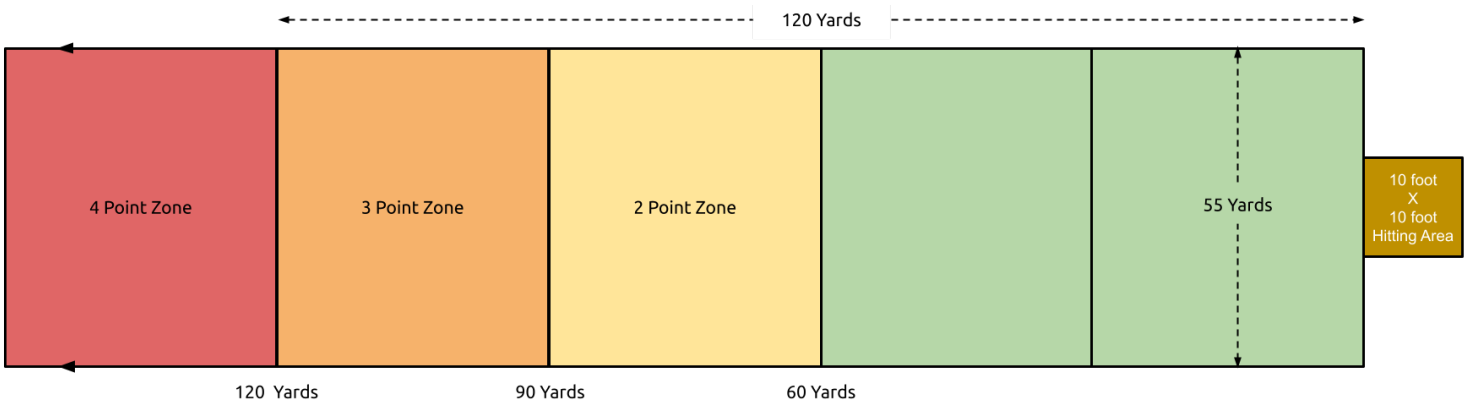
1. Purpose: To measure the athlete's ability to hit an iron shot for distance within a set hitting area.

2. Equipment
   a. Assorted irons for both right and left handed players.
   b. Appropriate number of golf balls based on the number of competitors. It is recommended that five balls per athlete be available to eliminate having to retrieve balls.
   c. Marking paint, chalk, rope or cones to mark hitting area and boundary lines. Pre-marked driving range stations can also be used.
   d. Hitting mat/carpet, tees, helmets, and a safety zone for scorekeepers to stand in.
   e. Visible markers to identify distance locations (cones, target flags, signs, banners, pool noodles, etc.)

3. Description (see ISC Event #5: Iron Shot diagram above)
   a. Athlete uses an iron and hits a golf ball off a tee, mat or the ground.
   b. Athlete is instructed to hit the ball from the hitting area staying within the 40-yard boundary width and achieving a distance of more than 90 yards.
   c. Size of boundaries may vary due to venue limitations.

4. Scoring
   a. The athlete will attempt five shots, scoring points according to where the ball comes to rest.
   b. The athlete will score 1 point for making a strike at the ball (contact with the ball). A swing and a miss counts as an attempt and as a result the athlete will receive a score of "0" for that attempt.
   c. The athlete will score 2 points if the ball comes to rest between the 30-yard and 60-yard lines within the 40-yard boundary width.
   d. The athlete will score 3 points if the ball comes to rest between the 60-yard and 90-yard lines within the 40-yard boundary width.
   e. The athlete will score 4 points if the ball comes to rest beyond the 90-yard line within the 40-yard boundary width.
   f. The sum total from five attempts will be the athlete's final score for the Iron Shot.
   g. The maximum score that can be attained is 20. The minimum score is zero.
   h. If the athlete receives assistance swinging, or otherwise moving the club in a forward motion, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

ISC Event #6: Wood Shot



1. Purpose: To measure the athlete's ability to hit a wood shot for distance within a set hitting area.

2. Equipment
   a. Assorted woods for both right and left handed players.
   b. Appropriate number of golf balls based on the number of competitors. It is recommended that five balls per athlete be available to eliminate having to retrieve balls.
   c. Marking paint, chalk, rope or cones to mark hitting area and boundary lines. Pre-marked driving range stations can also be used.
   d. Hitting mat/carpet, tees, helmets, and a safety zone for scorekeepers to stand in.
   e. Visible markers to identify distance locations (cones, target flags, signs, banners, pool noodles, etc.)

3. Description (see ISC Event #6: Wood Shot diagram above)
   a. Athlete uses a wood and hits a golf ball off a tee, mat or the ground.
   b. Athlete is instructed to hit the ball from the hitting area staying within the 55-yard boundary width and achieving a distance of more than 120 yards.
   c. Size of boundaries may vary due to venue limitations.

4. Scoring
   a. The athlete will attempt five shots, scoring points according to where the ball comes to rest.
   b. The athlete will score 1 point for making a strike at the ball (contact with the ball). A swing and a miss counts as an attempt and as a result the athlete will receive a score of "0" for that attempt.
   c. The athlete will score 2 points if the ball comes to rest between the 60-yard and 90-yard lines within the 55-yard boundary width.
   d. The athlete will score 3 points if the ball comes to rest between the 90-yard and 120-yard lines within the 55-yard boundary width.
   e. The athlete will score 4 points if the ball comes to rest beyond the 120-yard line within the 55-yard boundary width.
   f. The sum total from five attempts will be the athlete's final score for the Wood Shot.
   g. The maximum score that can be attained is 20. The minimum score is zero.
   h. If the athlete receives assistance swinging, or otherwise moving the club in a forward motion, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

FINAL ISC SCORE

1. The athlete's final score for the Individual Skills Contest is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the six events. The maximum final score possible for one round is 120 points.
2. A sample of the Golf Individual Skills Contest Scorecard can be found on following page (Page 17).

SAMPLE GOLF INDIVIDUAL SKILLS CONTEST SCORECARD

Special Olympics
Northern California
Individual Skills Contest (ISC) Scorecard
GOLF

Place Athlete Label Here

Athlete Name:		**Age Group:**		**Division:**	
Delegation:		**Gender:**			

	ATTEMPTS						
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	SCORE	Combined Score
SHORT PUTT							
LONG PUTT							
CHIP SHOT							
PITCH SHOT							
IRON SHOT							
WOOD SHOT							
						Total Score	

Event #1 - Short Putt & Event #2 - Long Putt

-For the Short Putt, the athlete will have 5 attempts to putt the ball at the hole from a line 80 inches from the hole

-For the Long Putt, the athlete will have 5 attempts to putt the ball at the hole from a line 26 feet from the hole

-Scoring

-**0 points** for a swing and a miss
-**1 point** for making contact with the ball
-**2 points** for a ball that stops on or within the 60-inch radius circle
-**3 points** for a ball that stops on or within the 20-in radius circle
-**4 points** for a ball that goes in the hole

-Long Putt Score is the sum of all points from the 5 attempts (Maximum of 20 points)
-Short Putt Score is the sum of all points from the 5 attempts (Maximum of 20 points)

Event #3 - Chip Shot

-Athlete will have 5 attempts to chip the ball at the hole from a hitting area 46 feet from the hole

-Scoring

-**0 points** for a swing and a miss
-**1 point** for making contact with the ball
-**2 points** for a ball that stops on or within the 20-foot radius circle
-**3 points** for a ball that stops on or within the 10-foot radius circle
-**4 points** for a ball that goes in the hole

-Score is the sum of all points from the 5 attempts (Maximum of 20 points)

Event #4 - Pitch Shot

-Athlete will have 5 attempts to pitch the ball over a barrier at the hole from a hitting area 16 feet from the barrier

-Scoring

-**0 points** for a swing and a miss
-**1 point** for making contact with the ball
-**2 points** for a ball that goes over the barrier within the 16 foot width of the barrier
-**3 points** for a ball that clears the barrier and lands inside and then out of the target circle OR lands outside and then rolls into the target circle
-**4 points** for a ball that clears the barrier and lands and comes to rest inside the target circle

-Score is the sum of all points from the 5 attempts (Maximum of 20 points)

Event #5 - Iron Shot & Event #6 - Wood Shot

-Athlete will have 5 attempts for the Iron Shot

-Athlete will have 5 attempts for the Wood Shot

-Scoring

	Iron Shot (40 yard wide boundary)	Wood Shot (55 yard wide boundary)
0 Points	Swing and a miss	Swing and a miss
1 Point	Make contact with the ball/outside of boundary	Make contact with the ball/outside of boundary
2 Points	Ball Rests between 30 and 60 yard lines	Ball Rests between 60 and 90 yard lines
3 Points	Ball rests between 60 and 90 yard lines	Ball rests between 90 and 120 yard lines
4 Points	Ball rests beyond 90 yard line	Ball rests beyond 120 yard line

-Iron Shot Score is the sum of all points from the 5 attempts (Maximum of 20 points)
-Wood Shot Score is the sum of all points from the 5 attempts (Maximum of 20 points)

SECTION L - 2026 RULE CHANGES

1. Actual rules changes listed below are in **red font, underlined and in bold print** within the rule book.

2. General formatting and wording changes.

3. Rule Change Summary:
   a. Added golf cart driver policy appendix.
   b. Clarified role of coaches during on-course play during practice and competition.

4. Changes within the Rules & Guidelines below:

Page 7 – Section A: General Rules

SECTION A: GENERAL RULES

5. All athletes and Unified Partners are required to walk the course. Exceptions: Golf carts may be used at events for medical reasons as well as any safety issues (i.e., extreme heat or fatigue). Also, carts may be used for golf bags and the scorekeepers. Athletes and partners may also utilize the carts from the green to tee in the case of extreme distances between green and tee. Final decisions for golf cart requests will be made by the golf committee at each competition. Please see Appendix B for the SONorCal Golf Cart Driver Policy.

Page 8 – Section D: Coaches and Their Responsibilities

SECTION D: COACHES AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

2. During on-course training and competition, coaches are not allowed to provide on-course coaching to athletes participating in any level of on-course play, including 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play (Level 2), 9-Hole Individual Stroke Play (Level 4) and 18-Hole Individual Stroke Play (Level 5). Such instruction/coaching shall be limited only to the driving range, practice greens or practice holes. Only during 9-Hole Alternate Shot Unified Play may the assigned Unified Partner provide on-course instruction/coaching to the assigned athlete.

APPENDIX A – USGA RULES FOR CADDIES

Below are rules relevant to Special Olympics play where caddies are utilized (9- and 18-Hole Individual Stroke Play). Full rules sections are available at
https://www.usga.org/rules/rules-and-clarifications/rules-and-clarifications.html#section=rules&itemNum=13

10.2 Advice and Other Help

b. Other Help

(1) **Getting Help from Caddie with Line of Play or Other Directional Information**. When a player's caddie is helping the player with the line of play or other directional information, the caddie is subject to the following limitations:

- The caddie must not set an object down to provide such help (and the player cannot avoid penalty by removing the object before the stroke is made).
- While the stroke is being made, the caddie must not:
    - Stand in a position for the player to play towards, or
    - Do anything else to provide such help (such as pointing out a spot on the ground).
- The caddie must not stand in the restricted area when not allowed under Rule 10.2b(4).

But this Rule does not prohibit the caddie from standing close to the hole to attend the flagstick.

…

(4) **Restricted Area for Caddie Before Player Makes Stroke**. When a player begins taking a stance for the stroke (which means they have at least one foot in position for that stance) and until the stroke is made, there are limitations relating to when and why a player's caddie may deliberately stand on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball (that is, the "restricted area") as follows:

- **Aiming**. The caddie must not stand in the restricted area to help the player with aiming. This help includes when the caddie moves away without saying anything but, by doing so, is giving a signal to the player that they are correctly aimed at the intended target. But there is no penalty if the player backs away before making the stroke and the caddie moves away from the restricted area before the player again begins to take a stance for the stroke.
- **Help Other Than Aiming**. If the caddie is helping the player with something specific other than aiming (such as checking to see if the player's club will hit a nearby tree during the backswing), the caddie may stand in the restricted area but only if the caddie moves away before the stroke is made and provided this positioning is not part of a regular routine.

There is no penalty if the caddie was inadvertently standing in the restricted area.

This Rule does not prohibit the player from getting help by having a person other than the player's caddie stand in the restricted area to help track the flight of a ball.

(5) **Physical Help, Eliminating Distractions, and Protection from Elements**. A player must not make a stroke:

- While getting physical help from their caddie or any other person, or
- With their caddie or any other person or object deliberately positioned to:
    - Eliminate distractions, or
    - Give protection from sunlight, rain, wind or other elements.

10.3 Caddies

Purpose of Rule: The player may have a caddie to carry the player's clubs and give advice and other help during the round, but there are limits to what the caddie is allowed to do. The player is responsible for the caddie's actions during the round and will get a penalty if the caddie breaches the Rules.

a. Caddie May Help Player During Round

(1) **Player Allowed Only One Caddie at a Time**.

A player may have a caddie to carry, transport and handle their clubs, give advice and help them in other ways allowed during a round, **but** with these limitations:

- The player must not have more than one caddie at any one time.
- The player may change caddies during a round, **but** must not do so temporarily for the sole purpose of getting advice from the new caddie.

Whether or not the player has a caddie, any other person who walks or rides along with the player or who carries other things for the player (such as a rain-suit, umbrella or food and drink) is not the player's caddie unless they are named as such by the player or also carries, transports or handles the player's clubs.

b. What a Caddie May Do

These are examples of what a *caddie* is allowed and not allowed to do:

(1) **Actions Always Allowed**. A *caddie* may always take these actions when allowed under the Rules:

- Carry, transport and handle the player's clubs and other *equipment* (including driving a cart or pulling a trolley).
- Search for the player's ball (Rule 7.1).
- Give information, advice and other help before the stroke is made (Rules 10.2a and 10.2b).
- Smooth bunkers or take other actions to care for the course (Rules 8.2 Exception, 8.3 Exception and 12.2b(2) and (3)).
- Remove sand and loose soil and repair damage on the putting green (Rule 13.1c).
- Remove or attend the flagstick (Rule 13.2b).
- Lift the player's ball once it is reasonable to conclude (such as from an action or statement) that the player will take relief under a Rule (Rule 14.1b).
- Mark the spot of the player's ball and lift and replace the ball on the putting green (Rules 14.1b Exception and 14.2b).
- Clean the player's ball (Rule 14.1c).
- Remove loose impediments and movable obstructions (Rules 15.1 and 15.2).

(2) **Actions Allowed Only With Player's Authorization**. A caddie may take these actions only when the Rules allow the player to take them and only with the player's authorization (which must be given specifically each time rather than given generally for a round):

- Restore conditions that were worsened after the player's ball came to rest (Rule 8.1d).
- When the player's ball is anywhere except on the putting green, lift the player's ball under a Rule requiring it to be replaced (Rule 14.1b).

(3) **Actions Not Allowed**. A caddie is not allowed to take these actions for the player:

- Concede the next stroke, a hole or the match to the opponent or agree with the opponent on the match score (Rule 3.2).
- Replace a ball, unless the caddie had lifted or moved the ball (Rule 14.2b).
- Drop or place a ball in taking relief (Rule 14.3).
- Decide to take relief under a Rule (such as treating a ball as unplayable under Rule 19 or taking relief from an abnormal course condition or penalty area under Rule 16.1 or 17); the caddie may advise the player to do so, but the player must decide.

APPENDIX B – SONORCAL GOLF CART DRIVER POLICY

The following policy will be in effect for Special Olympics Northern California (SONorCal) events where golf carts ("carts") are available for use.

1. Only authorized drivers shall be allowed to operate the cart. An authorized driver must have a current, valid State of CA driver's license and be approved and assigned to a cart for the practice or event.
2. Minors (under the age 18) whether licensed or not, may NOT operate a cart under any circumstances.
3. All cart drivers should familiarize themselves with the controls – key, starter, accelerator, brakes, reverse and steering as well as any boundary or speed limiters.
4. Drivers should use caution when reversing and make sure there are no persons or obstructions behind the cart.
5. The keys should always be removed, brakes set, and cart secured when the cart is unattended. Parking on inclines should be avoided whenever possible.
6. The number of passengers allowed on the cart should not exceed the number of seats available on the cart. Most carts are designed for a driver and one passenger. Spaces designed for golf bags or other equipment shall not be used for standing or seated passengers.
7. Drivers shall not operate a cart while drinking an alcoholic beverage, while intoxicated, or are otherwise impaired.
8. Drivers shall not operate a cart while taking medication that may result in drowsiness or inability to concentrate.
9. Drivers should understand weather conditions and adjust their speed when necessary, including allowing extra stopping distance when driving on wet or icy surfaces.
10. Drivers should always operate the cart in a defensive manner and never assume they have the right of way. Pedestrians should be approached with caution and should be made aware of the operator's presence – a horn or bell may be appropriate. The driver should be aware of and react properly to bicyclists, motor vehicles and other carts.
11. Drivers should never operate a cart on public roads, unless it is only to cross. All traffic signals and right-of-way rules should be obeyed. All turns should be properly signaled and directions checked before a turn is made or before entering an intersection.
12. Drivers should slow down and stop before entering or crossing public roads. All approaches to an intersection should be checked twice before crossing. Drivers should be aware that the cart does not accelerate as quickly as most vehicles. Extra time should be allowed when crossing an intersection.
13. Drivers should use caution when going downhill by reducing speed, being prepared to brake and avoiding sharp turns.
14. Equipment or supplies should not be carried unless secured properly to prevent objects from falling from the cart.
15. Cart privileges may be revoked at any time by SONorCal Staff or event directors if a driver does not adhere to all of the above, or it is determined that the driver is operating the cart in a dangerous manner. SONorCal Staff or event directors may also assume control of the cart for other needs at any time.
16. If the policy above is less strict than that of the facility, venue or cart owner, the facility/venue/cart owner's rules will supersede the above.
17. If the policy above is more strict than that of the facility, venue or cart owner, the SONorCal rules will supersede that of the facility/venue/cart owner.