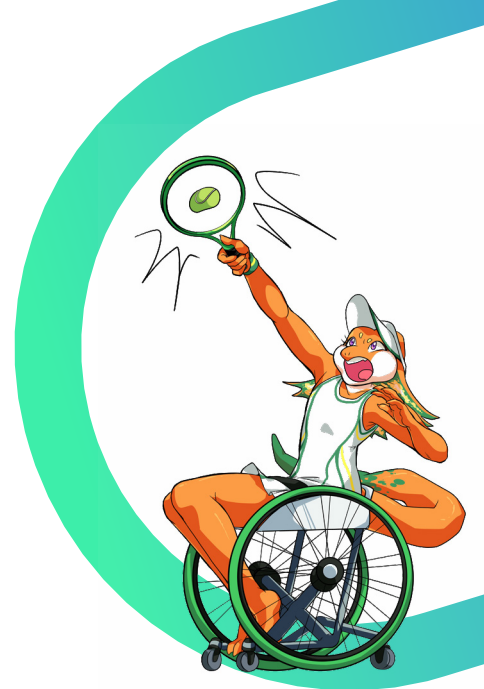




Paralympic Education Program



Understanding Classification

What is classification?

At the Paralympic Games, the athletes all have different impairments. Some might be missing a limb, others might need to use a wheelchair, and some might be completely blind, or some might just have bad eyesight but can still see a little.

So how do they compete fairly?

Well, that's why they have classification. It is a way to group athletes with similar impairments so that the race or event is fair, and no one has an unfair advantage. Classification in Para-sport is like having age groups in sport. At the school athletics or swimming carnival, younger students don't need to race against older students, Para-sport is similar.



Decide if you think these scenarios are fair or unfair:

- A 100kg wrestler versing a 50kg wrestler?
- A blind athlete competing at table tennis against a fully sighted athlete?
- An athlete who is missing a foot in a swimming race against a swimmer who is missing their entire leg?
- An athlete who uses a wheelchair but has full control of their arms in a wheelchair race against another athlete in a wheelchair, but they can't fully control their arms?



What about these scenarios?

- On wheelchair basketball teams, each team must have the same number of players who can and can't fully control their torso.
- One athlete has some minor co-ordination restriction effecting their right arm and leg swims against another athlete who is missing one leg.
- In a swimming race, an athlete who is missing three limbs competing against an athlete who can use their arms but cannot use their trunk or legs.
- In goalball, all players wear a blindfold even though some of them have some sight.

The first set of scenarios are unfair. The second set are considered fair and this is how classification works. In summary, classification is a set of rules designed to group people with similar impairments to ensure a fair competition.



What do all the letters and numbers mean?

Here's a quick overview of some of the classes for the sports which include athletes with different types of impairment:

Sport	Class	Impairment Type
Athletics T = track events F = field events 	T/F11-13	Vision Impairment.
	T/F 20	Intellectual Impairment.
	T/F 31-64	Physical impairment. Some athletes compete in a seated position, e.g. in a racing wheelchair or using a throwing chair; while other athletes compete standing.
Cycling 	H1- H5	Physical impairment. These athletes have a lower limb deficiency, so they use a handcycle.
	T1, T2	Physical impairment. These athletes have use of their arms and legs but use a tricycle to help with stability.
	C1-C5	Physical impairment. These athletes use a standard bicycle to compete.
	TB	Vision impairment.
Swimming S = freestyle, butterfly and backstroke events SB = breaststroke SM = individual medley 	S1-S10	Physical impairment.
	S/SB11-13	Vision impairment.
	S/SB14	Intellectual impairment.

Activity

Match the classification to the sport
by drawing lines between them!

F51

T34

Swimming

S6

T2

**Swimming –
Breaststroke**

B1

Cycling

**Athletics –
Field**

SB8

**Athletics –
Track**

Goalball



Answers:
F51 = Athletics – Field, T34 = Athletics – Track,
S6 = Swimming, T2 = Cycling, B1 = Goalball,
SB8 = Swimming – Backstroke

How does it work?

Generally, the greater the number in that impairment range, the less severe the impairment.

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If an athlete has a vision impairment, they will be classified into one of three classes:

- B1 – these athletes can't see at all or maybe can make out a little light.
- B2 – these athletes are able to make out an object or figure as long as it is very close to them.
- B3 – this is the least severe vision impairment to be eligible for Paralympic sport. These athletes will be able to make out an object or figure a bit further away.

These are the same across all sports but each sport will use a different letter.

So, B1, S11, T11 and F11 are all the same.

S = swimming; T = track; F = field.

Athletes with a vision impairment who compete in cycling all compete together in the TB class.

For physical impairments it is a little more complex.

Physical impairments can include: short stature, impaired muscle power, limb deficiency such as amputation and impaired co-ordination.

It is all about how much your movement is affected by your impairment. So, for example, someone who is a below-knee amputee has more movement than someone who is an above-knee amputee because they can use their knee joint to help them swim or run.

Here are some examples of athletes with different physical impairments who are in the same class:

S7/SB6

- Athlete one – is missing their right arm and left leg.
- Athlete two – has paralysis of their right arm and leg.
- Athlete three – Has full use of their arm and trunk but only some control over their legs.

S6/SB5

- Athlete one – has short stature
- Athlete two – is missing both arms

While these athletes appear to look very different, the effect of their impairment on their movement is the same so they compete together.

In team sports like wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby, each player is given a certain amount of points depending on their impairment. Each team cannot exceed a certain amount of points on court at any time. So teams must have a mix of athletes with less and more severe impairments.



Activity

Decide if the statements about classification below are true or false?



1. Swimmers with a missing limb compete against swimmers who have all limbs but with another physical impairment.	TRUE / FALSE
2. On a wheelchair basketball team, all athletes in a team with a greater ability to control their arms and torso can be on court at the same time.	TRUE / FALSE
3. Cyclists who are blind compete in separate races depending on their level of vision impairment.	TRUE / FALSE
4. In goalball, all athletes are blindfolded even if they have some sight.	TRUE / FALSE
5. In athletics field events, athletes who sit to throw compete in a different class to athletes who stand to throw.	TRUE / FALSE
6. Athletes who use a handcycle and tricycle compete in separate races.	TRUE / FALSE
7. In swimming, an athlete with short stature competes in the same class as an athlete with who is missing both legs and has deficiency in both arms.	TRUE / FALSE
8. In swimming and athletics, all athletes with a vision impairment compete in the same race, not separate classes.	TRUE / FALSE

Answers:
1. True, 2. False, 3. False, 4. True, 5. True, 6. True, 7. False, 8. False

Check out
your answers
here!

