



# **JUDO FOR ATHLETES WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES – GUIDELINES**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Judo Canada embraces an environment where equity, diversity and inclusion are cultural norms and where all individuals, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability are respected and valued.

This document provides guidelines for athletes with an intellectual disability who wishes to take part in any judo activities whatever their age and level. It also provides insight on possible pathway for athletes with an intellectual disability who would like to compete in local through to international competition.

Athletes with an intellectual disability being participants with risk factors, Judo Canada recommend that they receive a medical clearance before taking part in judo activities. This medical clearance should be updated when necessary and at the beginning of each season.

This document was established based on information provided by Special Olympics Canada (SOC), the Special Olympics world sport organization (SO) and the Special Needs Judo Union (SNJU).

## ADAPTED TRAINING AND INCLUSION IN DOJO

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Judo Canada promotes the benefits, principles and opportunities of equity, diversity and inclusion within provincial/national partners and judo clubs.

Judo Canada wishes to build relationships with established organizations and judoka with an intellectual disability in order to understand and address the barriers faced by them in engaging in the sport of judo, so that we can identify opportunities for mutual benefit and/or mutual support and encourage participation of these judoka in judo in Canada.

Inclusion of individuals with an intellectual disability in sport activities means understanding the needs of the individuals and their disability to ensure a safe practice environment. As such, every type of disability has its own demands and it should be understood and considered throughout the teaching/learning process. The above can be achieved if children and parents have complete accessibility, accommodations and equal opportunities. Intellectual disability cultural sensitivity training, role modeling and parent support/education should be provided in order to increase the participation and involvement of children with an intellectual disability in judo. In this context, judo clubs will need to create a positive environment for those judokas, so they feel welcomed regardless of their backgrounds.

Judo teachers play a critical role in the development of judokas with an intellectual disability. They must take the time to help children with an intellectual disability feel included and understand what is going on during the judo session. For that, they need to know what to do and be aware of the type of disability they must face and the associated means of communication.

Every intellectual disability is different (Down's Syndrome, autism, ADHD, ...) and the variation in mental abilities in people with the same disability also differs strongly. Nevertheless, there should not be any barrier to the development of practitioners who are really committed. As such the program and the judo teacher should strive to find the best possible and creative way to teach judo to athletes with an intellectual disability. Therefore, judo teachers should have adequate skills and be well informed about intellectual disability culture and awareness. The e-module "[Coaching Athletes with a Disability](#)"

provided by the Coaches Association of Canada (CAC) Locker is a minimum requirement for judo teachers who wish to teach these judokas. We further encourage judo teachers to follow trainings available on the CAC Locker under the eLearning section “Special Olympics” (from the dropdown menu in the top left corner of the eLearning page).

Training children with an intellectual disability in the sport of judo means creating conditions, and designing and implementing lessons that ensure the active involvement of all participants. The first step should be to further develop fundamental movement skills and introduce motor abilities as well as judo specific skills acquisition through modified games. Further steps should be the same as any other children but by keeping in mind that in addition to all the teaching/learning principles applied in regular judo programs for children, the following additional coaching tips apply when working with participants with an intellectual disability:

- Judo teachers should be knowledgeable about child intellectual disability and development
- Judo teachers need to be patient and understand the cognitive level of judoka with an intellectual disability and ensure they are treated equally with other athletes.
- Instructions during training should be given verbally as well as with signs. It helps the child to use both auditory and visual means to understand what is expected of them.
- Being creative to integrate an individual with intellectual disability into group activities where physical literacy and judo skills are developed means having/finding alternative approaches.

Examples of video instruction for athletes with an intellectual disability can be found in the following link:

- <https://www.specialneedsjudo.nl/instruction-videos/>

Special Olympics Canada offers an eLearning module on coaching athletes with autism:

- <https://bit.ly/33qneCW>

Further information to understand the complexity of children with an intellectual disability and have an insight into common behaviours (and how to deal with them) can be found in the following document “Including All Kids: Children with Special Needs in Judo”<sup>1</sup>:

- [https://www.judocanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Including-All-Kids\\_Visually-Impaired-Judoka-final.pdf](https://www.judocanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Including-All-Kids_Visually-Impaired-Judoka-final.pdf)

## CLASSIFICATION

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Based on Judo Sport Rules for Special Olympics classification / divisioning, athlete with an intellectual disability who wishes to participate at an event will need to be placed in the appropriate division, together with other athletes of similar abilities and characteristics. This act of divisioning will follow both the criteria of the IJF and the one of safety.

Such processes will have to take place during the event to confirm each individual skills and respective pools. Athletes will need to undergo an individual skill test based on the contest format for which they applied (Tachi-waza and ne-waza or only ne-waza if indicated on the application form).

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Torrie Johal

The test shall be carried out during a brief training session where a “divisioning official” together with the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) officials validate the division of the athlete. During this training session, the athlete will be asked to perform a list of “waza” techniques and they will be evaluated based on certain criteria. Following this evaluation, the athlete will be divisioned into 5 different levels based on their skills.

Further information on the above can be found in the “Judo Sport Rules – Special Olympics” in the “Section 3: Divisioning”:

- <https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/sport-rules/Sports-Essentials-Judo-Rules-2020-v3.pdf?ga=2.39732835.1564167590.1601386611-1082953726.1601386611>

## LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT (LTAD) MODEL FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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Special Olympics Canada (SOC) is a national organization dedicated to help people with intellectual disabilities develop self-confidence and social skills through sports training and competition.

The SOC developed a Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model to guide the physical literacy of each individual with an intellectual disability. It uses the same LTAD model as sport organizations across Canada and is one of the key elements in strengthening the Canadian sport system. This model is dedicated to supports athletes with an intellectual disability to pursue sport, whether it is for being active for life or to compete.

This LTAD includes the talent identification and development stages and promotes a barrier-free environment for athletes with an intellectual disability. It ensures that athletes with an intellectual disability have the tools to train and compete in their desired sports.

The SOC supports excellence from athletes competing at the Special Olympics World Games.

Further information concerning the LTAD for individuals with an intellectual disability can be found in the following links:

- <https://www.specialolympics.ca/>
- <https://www.specialolympics.ca/sites/default/files/SOC%20LTAD%20-%20Dec%204%202007%20-%20English%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

## COMPETITION CIRCUIT & SPECIAL OLYMPICS

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It is required that judo tournaments held in Canada meet or exceed standards that are presented in Judo Canada’s latest *Sanctioning Policy and Tournament Standards*.

Based on this document, rules applying to judokas with an intellectual disability during competition in Canada are as follows:

- Special Olympics Judoka:

- If a Special Olympics Judoka wishes to participate in a judo competition, providing that such arrangement can be made with respect of Judo Canada safety standards, the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) will accommodate this desire by creating a Special Olympic division with individuals who are of relatively equal level of ability and agree to abide by the following standards:
  - Maximum number of participants in a division shall be four (4);
  - All athletes are given an equal chance to participate, perform, and be recognized for doing their best by their teammates, family, friends, and fans;
  - Special Olympics Judoka are individuals with various level of intellectual disability;
  - Divisions for Special Olympic competition are made based on age, gender, exact weight and ability level – giving everyone a reasonably positive experience and a chance to win
  - Ability level is being evaluated as per the advice of a coach of the athlete entering the competition and confirmed with the individual skill test during the event.
  - Athletes need to specify whether they will compete in "tachi-waza" (standing start) or "ne-waza"(kneeling or sitting start).
  - No strangulations or arm-locks are allowed;
  - Each athlete, whether in the most able or least able division is valued and recognized;
  - In every division, all athletes receive an award, from gold, silver, and bronze medals, to fourth.
- Other Judoka with special needs:
  - If a special needs judoka with a disability other than the described wishes to compete in judo, the LOC of tournaments will accommodate their desire providing that the safety standards as expressed in the latest Judo Canada *Sanctioning Policy and Tournament Standards* are adhered to and that all participants in such event agree to abide by the same set of rules.

Special Olympics provides year-round competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with an intellectual disability. The World Games are its major event and are held every 2 years and regroup different sports. During such events, athletes are divisioned according to their ability levels, not only by weight and gender. The major difference between Special Olympics and mainstream judo competitions is that there are no strangulations or arm-locks allowed at Special Olympics. For such events, the standards are different and can be found in the following link:

- <https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/sport-rules/Sports-Essentials-Judo-Rules-2020-v3.pdf?ga=2.39732835.1564167590.1601386611-1082953726.1601386611>

## OFFICIAL REFEREEING RULES

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The rules presented hereafter will be applied during judo competitions in Canada for athletes with an intellectual disability. They are based on the official refereeing rules for judo competitions established by the Special Olympics world organization.

In general, the rules used during judo competitions for athletes with an intellectual disability will follow the rules of the IJF. The main amendments are listed hereafter:

- In all situations in which the rule book does not specifically determine, but where the referee is of the opinion that the safety of one or both of the athletes is at stake, the referee will stop/suspend the contest immediately and take those measures he/she deems necessary. Hereby, he/she is entitled to take punitive action by taking into account the intention of the action.
- Contest time: 3 minutes + 1 minute Golden Score if needed.
- If an athlete needs assistance entering onto the mat area of the competition, the coach is allowed to give assistance with the help of an (assistant) referee. (Note: No person shall be allowed onto the matted area without the referee’s permission.)
- Starting position:
  - It must be made known before the start of the contest whether the contest will be in “tachi-waza”(standing start) or "ne-waza" (kneeling or sitting start). If an athlete decided to compete in “ne-waza”, the other athlete has to adjust to the “ne-waza” starting position.
  - For safety reason, a referee can decide to switch the starting position to “ne-waza” after “Mate”.
  - A contest which has been started in "ne-waza", must be continued in "ne-waza".
  - There are two positions in "ne-waza" from which the athlete can start a contest.
    - From a kneeling position
    - Sitting next to each other, both with their hands in basic "kumi-kata" (grip-position) and the legs stretched forward
- At any time, it is possible to make points with a throwing technique from "ne-waza" provided the contest started in "ne-waza" or respectively at any time after the contest was switched to "ne-waza”.
- If the athletes are competing in "ne-waza", they are not allowed to push the opponent straight backwards.
- Prohibited Techniques:
  - Techniques which seem to be sacrificial throws (sutemi-waza)
  - Arm-lock techniques (ude-kansetsu-waza)
  - Entwine/embrace techniques – strangulations (shime-waza)
  - Sankaku-waza (triangle techniques)
  - To carry out a forward and backward throw on one or two knees when fighting in “tachi-waza”
  - Falling on top of another contestant after carrying out a good technique
  - Any technique that puts the neck of the opponent at stake is forbidden
  - In tachi-waza the following techniques are forbidden:
    - Koshi guruma
    - Kubi nage
  - In ne-waza, the following techniques are forbidden:
    - Hon kesa gatame
    - Makura kesa gatame
    - Kata gatame
    - Tate shiho gatame (except variation with only one arm pinned)
  - Further than that, any technique involving control of the head of Uke, is allowed only if Tori controls at the same time an arm of Uke with one of his own arms.
- Penalties:
  - In case of a forbidden action, the referee will give a warning and explain to the athlete the nature of the forbidden action. When the same error is repeated, the referee can take punitive action (based on skill level).
- Medical Restrictions

- An athlete with Down syndrome who has been diagnosed with Atlanto–axial instability may not participate in the sport of judo.

## SOURCES

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- *“Including All Kids: Children with Special Needs in Judo” – Torrie Johal:*
  - [https://www.judocanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Including-All-Kids\\_Visually-Impaired-Judoka-final.pdf](https://www.judocanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Including-All-Kids_Visually-Impaired-Judoka-final.pdf)
- *Special Olympics Canada:*
  - <https://www.specialolympics.ca/>
  - <https://www.specialolympics.ca/sites/default/files/SOC%20LTAD%20-%20Dec%204%202007%20-%20English%20-%20FINAL.pdf>
- *Special Olympics:*
  - [https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/sports/judo?\\_ga=2.78415572.1564167590.1601386611-1082953726.1601386611](https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/sports/judo?_ga=2.78415572.1564167590.1601386611-1082953726.1601386611)
- *Special Needs Union:*
  - <https://snju.org/>
- *Special Needs Union foundation:*
  - <https://www.specialneedsjudo.nl/lanquage/en/>

## FURTHER RESOURCES

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- *Autism Canada:*
  - <https://autismcanada.org/>
- *Down Syndrome Canada:*
  - <https://cdss.ca/>
- *ADHD Canada:*
  - <https://www.caddra.ca/>