



OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Doug Ute, Executive Director

Student Eligibility Guide for Interscholastic Athletic Participation in 7/8 Grade Schools

Overview

The purpose of seventh and eighth grade education-based athletics is to provide rich and wholesome activities for as many students as possible who meet the eligibility standards that have been approved by OHSAA members schools. As a result, students will develop to the greatest degree talents and skills such as leadership, teamwork and discipline, which will enable them to become responsible citizens in our society while demonstrating good sporting conduct.

We believe in interscholastic athletics as an integral part of the total school program reflecting the needs of the school, the community and the student. We believe the potential values to the student and coaches to be very essential. Competition under prescribed regulations and policies provides adolescents with the opportunity to develop ideas and habits of health, fair play, initiative, achievement, emotional control, good sporting conduct, social adaptability and good citizenship. Athletics foster team and school spirit and a sense of community.

We believe each coach should make every effort to provide an opportunity for participation for all eligible students involved in a sport. The students shall be taught the fundamental skills necessary for further growth and improvement in their respective sports. These skills are to be taught by an educated, trained and qualified coach. We believe that high quality skill development for students at the seventh and eighth grade level is of utmost importance.

PLEASE NOTE: Student-athletes and parents have the opportunity to ask school administrators questions on OHSAA and school eligibility requirements, the school's Athletic Code of Conduct policy and other issues during preseason meetings that the OHSAA requires schools to hold no later than two weeks after the beginning of each sports season. Meetings should include showing a presentation prepared by the OHSAA that reviews key student eligibility issues, healthy lifestyles, sporting behavior, concussion management and sudden cardiac arrest.

OHSAA Eligibility – Falsified Information (Bylaw 4-1)

If you compete under a name other than your own or provide false information in an attempt to establish athletic eligibility you will be subject to a period of ineligibility.

OHSAA Eligibility – Age (Bylaw 4-2)

A student who turns 15 before August 1 of the school year in which he/she desires to participate is not eligible for seventh and eighth grade athletics. There are limited exceptions to this regulation, so please arrange a meeting with your principal or athletic administrator to review these exceptions within Bylaw 4-2-2.

OHSAA Eligibility – Enrollment & Attendance (Bylaw 4-3)

After establishing seventh-grade eligibility, you are permitted only four (4) semesters of athletic eligibility at the 7th & 8th grade level. The semesters are taken in order of attendance once ninth-grade eligibility has been established. Semesters are counted toward eligibility whether you participate in interscholastic athletics or not. There are exceptions to this regulation, so please arrange a meeting with your principal or athletic administrator to review these exceptions.

Furthermore, students are only permitted to participate in sports at the school where they are enrolled and attending fulltime (Bylaw 4-3-1). State law permits certain classifications of non-enrolled students (home educated, non-public, community school, STEM students) to have participation opportunities at the public high school that the student would be entitled to attend under the tuition statute, (i.e., the school located in the parents' residential district or attendance zone for multiple high school districts). There is an additional option for home-educated and non-public school students. If you are participating via this legislation, note that the language says you shall be given the "same opportunities" to participate – not greater opportunities — and that you must meet the same eligibility requirements as other students. For more information on participation opportunities for non-enrolled students, go to the Eligibility section of the OHSAA website (<https://www.ohsaa.org/Eligibility/Enrollment>).



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OHSAA Eligibility – Scholarship (Bylaw 4-4)

In order to maintain eligibility for grades 7 and 8, you must be currently enrolled in a member school or be participating in accordance with state law, and you must have received passing grades in a minimum of four (4) classes in the immediately preceding grading period.

Summer school and other educational options may not be used to bring a student into compliance with scholarship bylaws, nor can they be used to compensate for lack of courses taken in the preceding grading period.

Your semester or yearly grades have no effect on OHSAA eligibility (although they could, depending upon your school's official grading periods). OHSAA eligibility is dependent upon grades received in the immediately preceding grading period.

In order to be eligible for the first grading period upon entrance into grade 9, you must have received passing grades in a minimum of four (4) classes in the immediately preceding grading period.

OHSAA Eligibility – Conduct, Character & Discipline (Bylaw 4-5)

In matters pertaining to personal conduct in which athletic contests and their related activities are not involved, the school itself is to be the sole judge as to whether the student may participate in athletics. In matters pertaining to personal conduct in which athletic contests and their related activities are involved, the principal and game officials shall file a report and the OHSAA office shall have jurisdiction to determine additional penalties including whether or not the student may participate in athletics. Further, any student who is subject to a penalty or consequences for violations of a school's Board adopted Code of Conduct (Student, Athletic) shall be declared ineligible in the event the student transfers to another school before the penalty or consequence has been fully served.

OHSAA Eligibility – Residency (Bylaw 4-6)

If your parent(s) or legal guardian live outside of Ohio, you will be ineligible unless one of the exceptions to the residency bylaw is met. The exceptions for out-of-state residency are found within Bylaw 4-6.

OHSAA Eligibility – Transfers (Bylaw 4-7)

The transfer bylaw is not applicable for seventh and eighth grade students. However, after completing eighth grade and/or establishing ninth-grade eligibility, a transfer to a different high school will mean you may lose eligibility for interscholastic athletics at your new school for a period of time. For the specifics on the period of ineligibility, visit www.ohsaa.org.

OHSAA Eligibility – International & Exchange Students (Bylaw 4-8)

If you are an International Student, you are ineligible unless you live in Ohio with your parent(s) or unless you meet one of the exceptions to the International & Exchange student bylaw (Bylaw 4-8). Please schedule a meeting with your school administrator to discuss the different exceptions.

OHSAA Eligibility – Recruiting (Bylaw 4-9)

You may be declared ineligible if you are recruited by a person or group of persons to transfer to or enroll in a high school for athletic purposes. This may include your transferring to a school at which one of your former school coaches has been hired. In addition, any attempt by you to recruit a prospective student-athlete for athletic purposes is also prohibited. A violation may also affect the eligibility of the school team.



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OHSAA Eligibility – Amateurism/Awards (Bylaw 4-10/Bylaw 5)

You may receive awards valued at \$500 or less from any source as a result from participation in any sport in which you are an interscholastic athlete, per event, as long as the award is not money/cash. Additionally, you will lose your amateur status in a sport and forfeit your eligibility if you:

- Compete for money or other compensation.
- Promote products on a social media account using the notoriety you receive from being an athlete in exchange for money, merchandise or services of value. (i.e. NO NIL DEALS)
- Receive money, merchandise or services of value based in whole, or in part, on the notoriety you receive from being an athlete.
- Sign a contract or make a commitment to play professional athletics.
- Receive services, merchandise or any form of financial assistance from a professional sports organization.
- Compete with a professional athletics team even if no pay is received.

Expenses for travel, meals and lodging may be accepted provided they are available to all participants and they are not contingent upon your team's and/or your finish. A form is available at www.ohsaa.org to maintain amateur status and must be submitted to the OHSAA.

OHSAA Sport Regulation – Open Gyms/Facilities

School officials may designate open gyms/facilities, the sport to be played, the grade levels involved and may also limit participants to those from your school. You may participate in open gyms/facilities, but remember:

- No one from the respective school may be excluded from participating;
- No one shall be required to attend;
- No school officials may invite selected students or determine the teams;
- No school officials may transport students to or from either school or non-school facilities;
- No coaching or instruction may be provided.

The OHSAA may impose penalties against you, your school and/or your coach for violating these regulations.

OHSAA Sport Regulation – Instruction

There are restrictions on the instruction a student-athlete can receive from school coaches outside of the season. Some of these regulations are also different for team sports vs. individual sports. Before receiving instruction outside the season from school coaches, visit <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/SchoolResources/Handbook.pdf> and review General Sports Regulation 7 to ensure all regulations are being followed. Some other key notes on these regulations:

- Besides during the season of your sport, school coaches may also provide team instruction between June 1 and July 31 for a total of 10 days. This would include such activities as volleyball, field hockey, soccer, basketball, ice hockey, lacrosse, baseball or softball teams competing in tournaments or 'shootouts,' football teams participating in 7-on-7's, or coaches conducting or taking teams to instructional camps from June 1-July 31 only.
- Between August 1 and May 31 and outside defined "no contact periods," school coaches may also provide individual instruction outside the season of play. There are restrictions for team sports, so review the OHSAA's Individual Skill Instruction regulations to ensure all standards are being followed.
- Individual skill instruction from non-school coaches may be received in any sport by a squad member at any time in individual or group lessons *provided* that these individual skill instructions do not violate any Board of Education, school administrators' or coaches' policies.
- It is a violation if a coach suggests a student-athlete's participation in instructional programs is mandatory outside the school season.



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OHSAA Sport Regulation – Non-School Teams

If you compete on a non-school team or in non-school competition as an individual in the same sport during your school team's season (example: non-school soccer during the school's soccer season), you may lose eligibility. There are also certain restrictions regarding tryouts, practices and competitions with non-school teams before, during and after your school season. Before participating with a non-school team, visit <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/SchoolResources/Handbook.pdf> and review General Sports Regulation 7 to ensure all regulations are being followed. Some other key notes on these regulations:

- A member of an interscholastic squad in a team sport (baseball, basketball, field hockey, football, ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball and volleyball) may not participate in an athletic contest, tryouts or any type of team or group training or practices on or with a non-school squad in the same sport during the school's interscholastic season once you become a member of the school team. **This would include college teams and/or college tryouts.**
- In the individual sports of bowling, cross country, golf, gymnastics, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field and wrestling, however, you may practice and try out for a non-school team but **may not compete in a contest during your school season.**
- A member of an interscholastic squad in a team sport (baseball, basketball, field hockey, ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball and volleyball) may try out, practice and compete on non-school teams before and after the school season from August 1 to May 31 (there are exceptions for baseball and softball) provided:

The OHSAA's non-interscholastic team limitation is maintained, meaning the number of students from the same school team on the roster of the non-school team is limited to six (6) students in the sports of baseball, field hockey, girls lacrosse, soccer, and softball; five (5) students in the sports of boys lacrosse and ice hockey; and three (3) students in the sports of basketball and volleyball. **School football team members are prohibited from competing on non-school teams except from June 1 to July 31. All football activities during the June 1 to July 31 period must be non-contact and the only football equipment permitted are helmets and cleats.** Note: Seniors are exempt from these limitations after the conclusion of their sport season.

- There is no limit on the number of students from the same school team that may participate on the same non-interscholastic team from June 1 to July 31 provided that non-interscholastic team is being coached by a non-school coach.

Check the OHSAA Sport-by-Sport Regulations (available at www.ohsaa.org) for the date you must cease participation on non-school teams in order to be eligible for OHSAA tournament competition, along with penalties for non-compliance with this date.

OHSAA Sport Regulation – Preparticipation Evaluation & Consent Forms

Before the student's first practice (or prior to the student's first participation should he/she join the team after the season has started), each student must have had a physical examination within the past year and an examination form signed by a medical examiner must be on file at your school. Physical examinations are valid for participation for 13 months from the date of the exam except for those that take place from May 1-June 1. Those exams are valid for one year plus through the end of the next school year's spring sports season.

In addition, no student will be eligible unless that student and his or her parents have signed the OHSAA Authorization Form, the OHSAA Eligibility & Authorization Statement, the Concussion Form and the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Form, all of which must be on file at your school.

OHSAA Sport Regulation – Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs & Steroids

The OHSAA does not permit the use of any form of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs at the site of any interscholastic contests. Besides the health risks involved, use of any of these items will result in you being disqualified from contests and likely facing additional school and legal penalties. There are additional issues related to illicit drugs, such as anabolic steroids and some prescription drugs used with the goal of aiding performance. If you use anabolic steroids or other performance-enhancing drugs of which the OHSAA is aware, you are ineligible for interscholastic competition until medical evidence indicates that your system is free of these drugs.

Another prominent issue is the use of supplements. The increased availability of these items allows student-athletes access to a wide variety of products aggressively marketed in fitness and strength training magazines and websites. Often their marketing campaigns include promises, endorsed by faulty research claims, of extra-ordinary weight loss, explosive power or tremendous strength gains. It is important for coaches, athletic administrators and parents to educate themselves about what substances your student-athletes may be using and about the potential risks involved with uneducated supplement use.



OHSAA Sport Regulation – Concussion & Sudden Cardiac Arrest Management

It is everyone's responsibility to take the necessary pre-cautions to reduce the likelihood of brain injuries and sudden cardiac arrest.

In Ohio, any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion, such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems, shall be immediately removed from the contest or practice and shall not return to play that same day. Thereafter, the student shall not return to practice or competition until cleared with written authorization from a physician or health care provider approved by the local board in accordance with state law.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is the most common cause of death among student-athletes, and dizziness, loss of breath and a racing heart are often symptoms that are overlooked. In many cases, recognizing the signs of cardiac trouble means student-athletes can continue their athletic participation.

Each school is required to review both its concussion and sudden cardiac arrest management protocols with students and their parents; each student and his or her parents must review and sign both the Ohio Department of Health's "Concussion Information Sheet" and a "Sudden Cardiac Arrest Information Sheet" prior to participation, and parents and students are highly encouraged to review short video presentations on both concussions and sudden cardiac arrest. Check with your school administrators on where to find these videos.

OHSAA Sport Regulation – Sporting Behavior

The OHSAA's vision for positive sporting behavior is built on expectations. It calls on the school community — administrators, teachers, coaches, students, parents and fans — to strive for positive sporting behavior in everything they do by teaching the values of ethics, integrity, equity, fairness and respect.

As a student-athlete, you are expected to accept the responsibility and privilege of representing your school and community while participating in school sports. You are expected to treat opponents, coaches and officials with respect, and ensure your actions do not incite fans or other participants or attempt to embarrass, ridicule or demean others.

The OHSAA has established a policy for students ejected for unsporting behavior or flagrant fouls. If you are ejected:

- You will be ineligible for all contests for the remainder of that day, and you will be ineligible for all contests at all levels in that sport until **two** regular season contests are played at the same level as the ejection (one contest in football).
- If you are ejected for **fighting** you will be ineligible for all contests for the remainder of that day, and you will be ineligible for all contests at all levels in that sport until **FOUR** regular season contests are played at the same level as the ejection (two contests in football).

If you are ejected a second time in a season, you are subject to additional, more stringent penalties, including suspension from play for the remainder of the season in that sport.

As a participant in school sports, you are expected to act with dignity, speak with courtesy and play with pride. In short, Respect the Game!

See Eligibility Checklist on Page 6...