

Saddleback Valley

Unified School District



ATHLETICS HANDBOOK

Student-Athletes & Parents





SVUSD GENERAL ATHLETICS POLICIES

Saddleback Valley Unified School District athletic programs are designed to provide students with the opportunities to develop both physical and mental strength. We believe that a successful athletic program helps our athletes develop a sense of pride, self-confidence and encourages leadership skills. Our athletes learn self-discipline which will help them through their adult life, where the ability to maintain poise and self-control in all situations is vitally important. We encourage all athletes to strive for excellence, and to understand that the path to success requires hard work and determination. Moral conditioning and sportsmanship are a key component in our athletic programs. Athletes are required to work diligently to achieve both individual and team goals as well as to meet the athletic standards of the District.

Interscholastic athletics is a voluntary program in which participation is a privilege and not a right. Accompanying that privilege is the responsibility of the athlete to conform to the following guidelines established for all participants in the athletic program.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

This section outlines the requirements student-athletes must meet to be eligible for participation in interscholastic athletics, including CIF and District standards. All references to CIF-SS Bylaws can be found in the CIF-SS manual called the Blue Book. The Blue Book can be found at www.cifss.org under Resources.

Age

A student whose 19th birthday is on or before June 14 is ineligible to compete during the following school year. (CIF-SS Bylaw 203)

A student may not compete:

- On a freshman (9th grade) team after he or she has reached his or her 16th birthday on or before June 15 preceding their freshman year. (CIF-SS Bylaw 203.1)
- On a sophomore or frosh-soph team after he or she has reached his or her 17th birthday on or before June 15 preceding their sophomore year. (CIF-SS Bylaw 203.1)
- On a varsity football team before turning 15, unless a CIF waiver is granted.

Medical Clearance

Participation in athletics requires adherence to all health and safety protocols. Student-athletes and parents/guardians must review and acknowledge all required health and safety information prior to participation.

Each athlete must have a physical exam by a qualified physician on file prior to tryouts, practice, or competition. All required information, waivers, and uploads must be submitted through the student's [athletic clearance](#) account. The physical exam is valid for one calendar year.

Students may not participate in any athletic activity until clearance is approved.

Academic

Student-athletes must meet all academic eligibility requirements established by SVUSD and CIF, including minimum GPA, course enrollment, and progress toward graduation.

Students must meet all district and CIF academic standards to participate in athletics:

- Earn a 2.0 GPA or higher during the previous grading period.
- No more than one (1) "U" in citizenship during the previous grading period.
- No more than one (1) "F" grade during the previous grading period.
- Must have passed at least four (4) classes (20 credits) in the previous grading period.
- Only one (1) Physical Education or Athletics class may count toward the 20 credits.
- Must be currently enrolled in at least five (5) classes (25 credits minimum).

If a student attempts to improve a grade during summer school by taking the same class, the summer school grade can replace the grade received the preceding grading period. However, if a student takes a different class than that which was previously taken, the summer school grade is to be averaged with all grades received the preceding grading period.

Academic Waiver

Students who do not earn a 2.0 GPA or higher at the end of a grading period may be approved for an academic probation waiver, allowing them to remain fully eligible to practice and compete for that grading period. The waiver may be used only once during high school and provides a one-time probationary period not to exceed one semester. Once a student has chosen to utilize a probationary waiver, the decision is final and cannot be revised or retracted once it has been signed by an administrator.

Academic Eligibility Timelines

SVUSD has four grading periods (1st quarter, 1st semester, 3rd quarter, and 2nd semester). Student eligibility and ineligibility will go into effect on the Monday of the second week of school after grades have been finalized by SVUSD.

Eight Consecutive Semesters

Students are limited to eight (8) consecutive semesters of athletic eligibility beginning with the start of 9th grade. This eligibility period runs continuously, regardless of school transfers, academic standing, enrollment status, or participation in athletics. Student eligibility cannot be paused, reset, or extended for any reason.

Residency

To be eligible for athletics, student-athletes must be enrolled at the school they represent and reside in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District attendance area in a bona fide residence with their parent(s) or court-appointed guardian(s). Students living outside the attendance area must receive approval through SVUSD Student Services.

A student establishes initial athletic eligibility upon first enrollment in 9th grade. Any student who transfers after enrolling in 9th grade must complete all required California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) transfer documentation and may not participate in contests until official CIF approval is granted.

Eligibility following a change of residence requires a verified, bona fide family move with appropriate documentation. If there is no bona fide move, the student's athletic eligibility may be restricted, including limitation to sub-varsity competition or a period of ineligibility, as determined by CIF.

Transfer

Eligibility following a change of residence requires a verified, bona fide family move with appropriate documentation. If there is no bona fide move, the student's athletic eligibility may be restricted, including limitation to sub-varsity competition or a period of ineligibility, as determined by CIF.

Students transferring for disciplinary reasons are ineligible until the disciplinary period assigned by the previous school has been completed. Refer to the CIF Southern Section Blue Book Bylaw 207. (CIF-SS Bylaw 207)

Undue Influence / Recruiting

Any attempt to influence a student's enrollment for athletic purposes, including financial, material inducements, or pre-enrollment contact is prohibited. Students who engage in or benefit from these actions may be declared ineligible for CIF competition for up to one (1) year, and violations may result in sanctions against the school and its athletic program. (CIF-SS Bylaw 510)

Outside Team Competition

During the high school season of sport, students may not compete on an outside team in the same sport. Participation in a non-school competition during the season will result in loss of eligibility for the remainder of that CIF season. (CIF-SS Bylaw 600)

STUDENT-ATHLETE CONDUCT STANDARDS

This section defines the expectations for behavior, responsibility, and sportsmanship required of all student-athletes. Student-athletes represent their team, school, and community at all times and are expected to uphold high standards of conduct and integrity. Participation in athletics is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked if expectations are not met.

Personal Conduct

Student-athletes are expected to demonstrate responsible behavior in all settings, including school, athletic activities, and the community. Any violation of the [CIF Code of Ethics](#), or conduct occurring during school or after school hours, or as part of a school activity, including conduct on social media and other digital platforms by a student that brings discredit to them, their team, or their school is not acceptable and may be grounds for suspension of athletic privileges.

This includes, but is not limited to, misconduct, substance use, performance-enhancing substances banned by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency unless prescribed by a licensed health care provider, criminal behavior, acts of violence/vandalism, or violations of school or district rules. Students on school suspension are ineligible to participate in or attend any co-curricular activity.

Sportsmanship and Integrity

Student-athletes are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and fair play at all times, including during all athletic competitions. Student-athletes are expected to act in accordance with the core principles of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship, and to follow the [CIF Codes of Ethics](#). This includes maintaining self-control, using appropriate language, and treating teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, and spectators with respect. Student-athletes are expected to be modest in victory, gracious in defeat, and to demonstrate integrity in all aspects of participation.

Academic and School Responsibilities

Academic achievement is the primary responsibility of all student-athletes. Students must attend classes regularly, maintain passing grades, and demonstrate respect for teachers, staff, and the learning environment. Failure to maintain academic eligibility may result in a loss of athletic participation.

Safety and Team Environment

Student-athletes are responsible for maintaining a safe and positive team environment. Hazing, bullying, fighting, or any behavior that may result in harm to individuals or property is prohibited. Student-athletes are expected to report concerns related to safety, misconduct, or violations of team or school rules to a coach or school administrator. Students are expected to follow all expectations related to locker room conduct, team activities, transportation, and the use of school facilities and equipment.

Commitment and Team Expectations

Participation in athletics requires commitment and accountability. Student-athletes are expected to attend practices and contests, be present and prepared, and actively participate. They are expected to give consistent effort, remain engaged, and contribute positively to their team environment. Student-athletes must follow the direction and instruction of coaches and school staff at all times and adhere to all team rules and training expectations. A student-athlete removed from a team for disciplinary reasons may not participate in another sport until that season has concluded.

Program and Equipment Responsibilities

Student-athletes are responsible for all equipment and uniforms issued to them and must return all items in accordance with school procedures. Failure to return equipment or pay for lost or damaged items may result in loss of awards and restriction from future participation.

COMMUNICATION

This section outlines the process for addressing questions or concerns related to athletic programs and establishes expectations for respectful and appropriate communication.

Open and respectful communication between student-athletes, parents, and coaches is essential to a positive athletic experience. Concerns should be addressed through the appropriate process outlined below. Discussions should not take place during contests or immediately following games.

Student-athletes are encouraged to take the lead in communicating questions or concerns directly with their coach. This supports the development of responsibility, communication skills, and problem-solving.

If a concern is not resolved, a parent or guardian may request a meeting with the coach that includes the student-athlete. Communication should remain respectful and focused on resolving the concern.

If the issue remains unresolved, the matter may be referred to the Athletic Director, who may request that concerns be submitted in writing and may facilitate a meeting with the involved parties.

Concerns that are not resolved at the athletic director level may be referred to school administration.

Certain areas are the responsibility of the coach and are not subject to appeal through this process. These include decisions related to playing time, position assignments, lineups, competitive strategy, and team discipline.

when applied consistently with team and school expectations.

All participants in this process are expected to communicate respectfully. Student-athletes and parents will not be subject to retaliation for raising concerns through the established process.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to and from athletic activities may be provided by the District, coordinated through approved volunteers, or arranged by the student or parent/guardian. Transportation for tournaments outside of Orange County or events held on weekends may be limited. The District will provide notice of the mode of transportation at least 48 hours prior to each event.

When District transportation is provided, student-athletes are expected to travel with the team. If a parent/guardian wishes to arrange alternative transportation, a Transportation Exemption form must be submitted to the Assistant Principal for approval at least 24 hours prior to the event. Approval is not guaranteed, and the Assistant Principal reserves the right to deny any request.

Student-athletes remain under school supervision and are subject to all school and district rules for the duration of any athletic trip. Students are expected to follow all directions from coaches and staff and to represent their school appropriately at all times.

Student-athletes must remain with the team and may not leave or arrange independent transportation unless prior approval has been granted. Students are expected to follow all travel expectations, including behavior, schedules, and supervision guidelines.

At the conclusion of an event, student-athletes must be picked up promptly or leave through an approved method of transportation. Students may not remain on campus or at a school site unsupervised.

Student-athletes are expected to follow all safety directions and immediately report any concerns or incidents to a coach or school staff member.

All school and district policies remain in effect for the duration of any athletic trip.

The District suggests a voluntary transportation donation of \$75 per athlete for those who utilize District transportation. Donations are voluntary and will not affect a student's ability to participate. All donations should be submitted to the school ASB office.

Transportation donations are non-refundable once the team roster has been finalized. Donations will be refunded if a student is removed from the team, provided the refund is requested through the ASB office within 30 days of the roster decision and verified by the coach.

VOLUNTARY PARENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Saddleback Valley Unified School District is proud to offer a wide range of athletic and co-curricular programs that provide meaningful opportunities for student growth, connection, and achievement. While the District provides funding for essential program costs, including coaching stipends, facilities, transportation, officials, and

California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) membership fees, these resources do not fully cover the cost of operating comprehensive, high-quality programs.

As a result, schools and programs rely on voluntary donations and fundraising efforts to support additional expenses such as uniforms, equipment, tournament and festival fees, assistant coaching support, and enhanced program opportunities. These contributions help sustain and strengthen programs by expanding access to resources, increasing opportunities for participation, and maintaining the overall quality of the student experience.

Families are encouraged to support their student's program through donations, volunteer time, or participation in fundraising activities. All donations and fundraising participation are strictly voluntary. A student's ability to participate in any program will not be affected by a family's decision or ability to contribute.

ATHLETIC PROGRAM ENROLLMENT AND PARTICIPATION

This section outlines the requirements, expectations, and procedures for joining and participating in athletic programs, including team selection, clearance, and program responsibilities.

Team Selection and Enrollment

Enrollment in athletics is initiated with the head coach of the program. Students must receive approval from the head coach in order to be admitted into the athletic period. A position on a team is not guaranteed, and students must try out and meet the standards established by the coach.

Clearance and Eligibility to Participate

Prior to participation on any team, all students must complete the athletic clearance process and be formally cleared by athletic administration. Students who have not been cleared are not permitted to participate in tryouts, practices, or competition.

In addition, all student-athletes must provide proof of medical insurance before the first practice session. The District offers optional supplemental athletic insurance through a private carrier, and information is available through each high school's athletic office.

Attendance

A student must attend school on the day of competition or performance for at least 240 minutes. Students absent from school on days of competition are not eligible to participate (e.g., a student absent all day cannot participate in an evening football game). (Per Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 6145.1)

Athletic Period Expectations

The athletic period is reserved exclusively for eligible student-athletes and is dedicated to training for competitive sports. Students are expected to demonstrate maturity, self-control, and appropriate behavior at all times. Disruptive or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Any student-athlete who violates the Athletic Code or athletic period expectations may be subject to removal from the team and/or reassignment from the athletic period.

When the athletic team DOES NOT meet during the athletics period, the student will have a "free" period, and the student will be deemed released from school; SVUSD will have no liability for the student's coming or going to school during the free period. (Education Code Section 44808)

Early Dismissal for Athletic Events

It is often necessary for student-athletes to leave school prior to the end of the school day in order to travel to or prepare for contests. While this may be necessary, student-athletes remain responsible for all missed classwork and are expected to maintain their academic performance. Teachers may withhold early dismissal if a student is not meeting academic or behavioral expectations.

Financial Obligations and Equipment Responsibility

Student-athletes are responsible for all uniforms, materials, and equipment issued to them as students and as members of an athletic team, including items such as textbooks, Chromebooks, and athletic gear. These items are District property, may only be used for approved school activities, and must be returned in accordance with school procedures.

Failure to return equipment or materials, or to resolve any resulting financial obligations, may result in restrictions on athletic participation, eligibility for awards, and future athletic opportunities. In cases involving lost, damaged, or unreturned District property, the District may pursue reimbursement and may withhold grades, transcripts, or diplomas in accordance with Education Code and District policy.

Program/Sport Changes and Transfers

Students transferring from one team to another must obtain a release from their current coach and present it to the new coach. The new head coach will coordinate any schedule change request with the athletic director or assistant principal overseeing athletics.

Athletic Period Eligibility

Students who fail physical education will be ineligible for the athletic period the following semester. Eligibility may be reinstated once the student earns a passing grade during the next grading period and is approved for transfer back into the athletic period.

Commitment

Participation in athletics requires a commitment for the duration of the season. A student who wishes to withdraw from a sport must obtain approval from the coach or advisor. A withdrawal from athletics may result in a schedule change, will prevent the student from participating in another sport during the same season, attending the banquet, and may result in a Withdraw/Fail grade for the class.

Awards

Awards for athletic achievement are typically presented through the Associated Student Body in accordance with league guidelines and California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) rules.

Booster clubs and other organizations may present additional awards with prior approval from school administration. However, primary recognition is based on participation and contribution to the team, typically reflected through the awarding of a letter or certificate of achievement.

Athletic programs emphasize the value of participation, effort, and personal growth, with recognition serving as a reflection of the student-athlete's commitment rather than a focus on symbolic rewards.