



2020-21 Edition

Eligibility Guide for Participation In 7th-8th Grade Athletics

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Ohio High School Athletic Association 7th-8th Philosophy

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.

OHSAA 7th-8th Grade Summary of Facts

- 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 two limited exceptions to this regulation outlined in Bylaw 4-2-2).
- 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.
- The minimum scholastic requirement for the OHSAA is students must have received passing grades in at least **four** classes during the immediately preceding grading period. Districts may establish criteria more stringent than the OHSAA.
- In matters of academic eligibility, please refer to your district administrator for more specific school academic policies.
- If a seventh and eighth grade student is ineligible, the district's policy will determine if he/she can practice but not

dress during middle school contests. The OHSAA does not stipulate practice regulations.

- There are no size and weight requirements for any seventh and eighth grade sport, with the exception of wrestling.
- Designated dates for the start and end of each 7th-8th grade school athletic season can be found in the General Sports Regulations of the *OHSAA Handbook*, which is posted at www.ohsaa.org.
- A seventh and eighth grade athlete cannot compete in contests, including scrimmages, and/or practices/training with or against athletes in grades 9-12 during the school sports season.
- Seventh and eighth grade students cannot play in a contest with non-school teams or in non-school competition as an individual during the same sports season (example: non-school soccer during the school's soccer season).
- Seventh and eighth grade students can attend seventh and eighth grade or high school summer sports camps.
- Between August 1 and May 31 and outside defined "no contact periods," school coaches may also provide individual instruction outside the season of play.
- You may be declared ineligible if you are recruited by a person or group of persons to transfer to or enroll in a 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 to a school for athletic purposes is also prohibited. A violation may also affect the eligibility of the school team.
- The transfer bylaws apply to all students enrolled in grades 9-12. They do not apply to students enrolled in grades 7 and 8.
- A complete listing of information regarding interscholastic athletics can be found on-line at www.ohsaa.org. Parents are also encouraged to talk with their child's coaches and school and athletic administrators with questions regarding specific sports regulations.

7th-8th Grade Regulations Overview

The essential eligibility requirements in this publication are **only a summary** of some of the regulations affecting student eligibility. OHSAA eligibility requirements are published in the *OHSAA Handbook*, which can be found in the offices of your principal, your athletic administrator or on the OHSAA website (www.ohsaa.org). Your school district also has the authority to establish additional eligibility standards, including academic and codes of student or athletic conduct.

OHSAA Regulations On Scholarship

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 Regulations On Semesters

After you complete the sixth grade and before entering ninth grade, you are permitted athletic eligibility for a period not to exceed **four semesters** taken in the order of attendance, whether you participate or not. This relates in concept to the eight-semester limit regulation that is in place for high school students and has one limited exception.

OHSAA Regulations On Age

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 Regulations On Residence

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

OHSAA Regulations On Non-Enrolled Students

Legislation permits non-enrolled students (home educated, non-public, community school, STEM students) to have participation opportunities at the public 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 if the student's respective school does not offer athletics/the sport. 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 (www.ohsaa.org).

OHSAA Regulations On Transfers

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 Regulations On International & Exchange Students

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 Bylaw.

OHSAA Regulations On Amateurism/Awards

You may receive awards valued at \$400 or less from any source as a result from participation in any sport in which you are an interscholastic athlete. You may never accept cash awards, however.

You will lose your amateur status in a sport and forfeit your eligibility if you:

- Compete for money or other compensation.
- Capitalize on your athletic fame by receiving money, merchandise or services.
- 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.
- Enter into an agreement with a sports or marketing agent.

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 Regulations On Recruiting

You may be declared ineligible if you are recruited by a person or group of persons to attend a middle school for athletic purposes.

After completing eighth grade, you may also be declared ineligible if you are recruited by a person or a group of persons to attend a high school for athletic purposes. This may include your transferring to a school where one of your

former coaches has been hired. **2**

OHSAA Regulations On 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 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 Regulations On False Information

If you compete under a name other than your own or provide false information in an attempt to establish athletic eligibility, you shall immediately become ineligible for a period of time.

OHSAA Regulations On Instruction

There are restrictions on the instruction you can receive from school coaches outside of your season. Some of these regulations are also different for team sports vs. individual sports. Before receiving instruction outside the season from your school coaches, visit www.ohsaa.org, go to the General Sports Regulations and review the section on Instructional Programs 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 August 31. 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 September 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 your participation in instructional programs is mandatory outside the school season.

OHSAA Regulations On 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 OHSAA.org, go to the General Sports Regulations and review the sections on Non- Interscholastic Programs 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 an individual becomes a member of a school team.
- 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 September 1 to May 31 (there are exceptions for baseball and softball) provided:
- The OHSAA's '50 percent limitation' regulation is maintained, meaning the number of students from the same school team on the roster of the non-school team is limited to five (5) students in the sports of soccer, field hockey, ice hockey and lacrosse; four (4) students in the sports of baseball and softball; three (3) students in the sport of volleyball, and two (2) students in the sport of basketball. 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.
- There is no limit on the number of students from the same school team that may participate on the same non-school team from June 1 to August 31.

OHSAA Regulations/Guidance On Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs and 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 extraordinary 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.

www.ohsaa.org offers a wealth of information for parents, coaches and students about these topics and other issues.

OHSAA Regulations On Preparticipation Evaluations and 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 Regulations and Expectations On Concussion and Sudden Cardiac Arrest Management

It is everyone's responsibility to take the necessary precautions 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 Regulations and Expectations On 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 a second time in a season, you are subject to additional, more stringent penalties, including a maximum penalty of 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!

Why We Play The Games

For many of you, playing on your middle school and high school teams may be the last time you will participate in competitive athletics. As a participant, you should work hard, have fun and strive to be the best. But just as important, you should also strive to be the best students, teammates and members of your community in preparation for the next phase of your life as a responsible adult and productive citizen.

The purpose of interscholastic athletics is to enrich your middle school and high school experiences; promote citizenship and sportsmanship; instill a sense of pride in community; teach lifelong lessons of teamwork and self-discipline, and help you grow physically and emotionally. In short, interscholastic athletic programs are educational in nature and therefore complement a student's school experience.

Other sporting organizations promote free player movement, are primarily designed to promote athletic development of the individual, and provide a showcase for the athletic talents of those individuals. However, these organizations do not share the primary educational purposes of OHSAA member schools and therefore cannot provide the unique type of competition created by the OHSAA through our member schools.

Statistics show that students who participate in interscholastic athletics programs tend to have higher grade-point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates and fewer discipline problems than the general student population. Statistics also show that only one percent of all high school participants will earn a Division I college athletic scholarship and approximately five percent will play collegiately in any division. Unlike major colleges and professional sports teams, interscholastic athletic programs do not exist to entertain spectators.

As your parents can attest, middle school and high school go by in a blur, but your memories of participating in school sports will stay with you for a lifetime. The OHSAA wants to make sure your time as an interscholastic athlete is meaningful and memorable.

The privilege of participating in educational athletics is one of the most exciting experiences of your life. You must earn the privilege to participate. Please maintain the proper perspective in this journey and remember why we play the games.

Ohio High School Athletic Association

Participating in your school's interscholastic athletics program is not only a privilege, but also provides memorable experiences. The role of the OHSAA is to:

- Help ensure students are provided a positive environment for athletic participation;
- Ensure all rules, regulations and decisions are fair and equitable for all schools and participants;
- Ensure athletes play under safe conditions, and
- Ensure school sports programs remain a vital part of your educational experience.

Like the other 814 public and non-public high schools and approximately 900 7th and 8th grade schools, your school has volunteered to become a member of the OHSAA. Ohio is one of the top ranked states in the country in regards to participation with over 350,000 high school students competing in 26 sanctioned sports.

The OHSAA Executive Director and his staff are based in Columbus and their primary responsibilities are to:

- Interpret the rules and regulations for member schools;
- Conduct tournaments for high schools including sectionals, districts, regionals and state tournaments, and
- Serve as educators for officials, coaches, administrators and student-athletes and their parents.

To continue as a member of the OHSAA, each school's governing boards annually affirm that their schools will follow the OHSAA bylaws and regulations approved by the membership. Any changes to the bylaws must be approved by a majority vote of member school principals. The OHSAA Board of Directors has the authority to change general sports regulation, sport-by-sport regulations and tournament regulations based on recommendations from the Executive Director's staff.

The OHSAA does not charge schools any membership fees or tournament entry fees. Schools are provided rulebooks, educational materials and other printed items along with catastrophe insurance coverage for all participants at a cost of approximately \$600,000 annually. Additionally, schools are reimbursed for many of their tournament expenses and in some sports have the opportunity to keep a portion of receipts from the sale of tournament tickets.

Other key programs and initiatives of the OHSAA include:

- Licensing, registering and training nearly 17,000 contest officials, and
- Ensuring coaches are certified to work with student-athletes through an on-going coach education program.

Ohio High School Athletic Association Eligibility Checklist

For 7th-8th Grade Students Enrolled and/or Participating at an OHSAA Member School (Updated 4/8/20)

Before you play, you must be eligible. Please review the following checklist with your parents. Unchecked boxes may mean you are NOT eligible. For questions, see your principal or athletic administrator.

- I am officially enrolled in an OHSAA member high school or participating in accordance with state law.
- I received passing grades in at least **four** subjects during the immediately preceding grading period.
- I have a biological and/or adoptive parent who lives in Ohio.
- I did not turn 15 before August 1 of the school year in which I desire to participate.
- I understand I am only permitted four semesters of eligibility whether I play or not once I have enrolled in grade seven and before entering grade 9.
- I have not received an award, equipment or prize valued at greater than \$400 per item per source.
- I am competing under my true name and have provided my school with my correct home address.
- I have not competed in a **mandatory** open gym/facility, conditioning or instructional program outside the school season.
- I have not been coached or provided instruction **by a school coach** in a team sport in which I participate other than during my sport season, during an instructional period approved by the OHSAA outside the season observing the 50% roster limitation,
- I am not competing on a non-school team or in non-school competition as an individual **during my school team's season** in the same sport.
- I have not been recruited for athletic purposes to attend this school.
- I am not using anabolic steroids or other performance-enhancing drugs.
- I have had a physical examination within the past year and it is on file at my school.
- My parents and I attended a preseason meeting at my school which the OHSAA requires to be held no later than two weeks after the beginning of each sports season. We viewed a presentation prepared by the OHSAA to review key eligibility issues, healthy lifestyles and sporting behavior.
- My school also reviewed with my parents and me its concussion management protocol, we reviewed and signed the Ohio Department of Health's "Concussion Information Sheet" prior to participation, and we reviewed a short presentation on concussions available at no cost at nfhslearn.com.
- My school also reviewed with my parents and me the Sudden Cardiac Arrest video, and we reviewed and have signed the Ohio Department of Health's "Sudden Cardiac Arrest Information Sheet" prior to participation and we reviewed a short presentation on Sudden Cardiac Arrest.
- My parents and I have signed the OHSAA Authorization Form and the OHSAA Eligibility and Authorization Statement, and they are on file at my school.

Student Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

Student Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Student Date

Parent/Guardian Date

NOTE: This form has been provided as a service to the OHSAA membership for schools to utilize with student-athletes and their parents/guardians. Use of this form is at the sole discretion of each member school.